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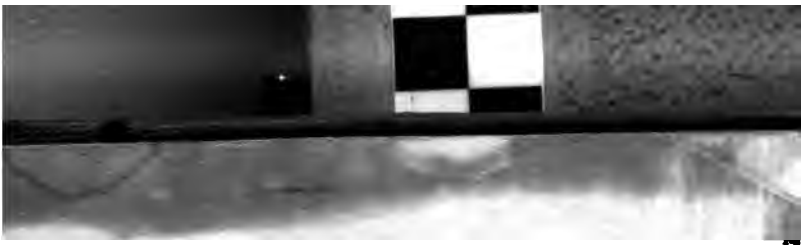

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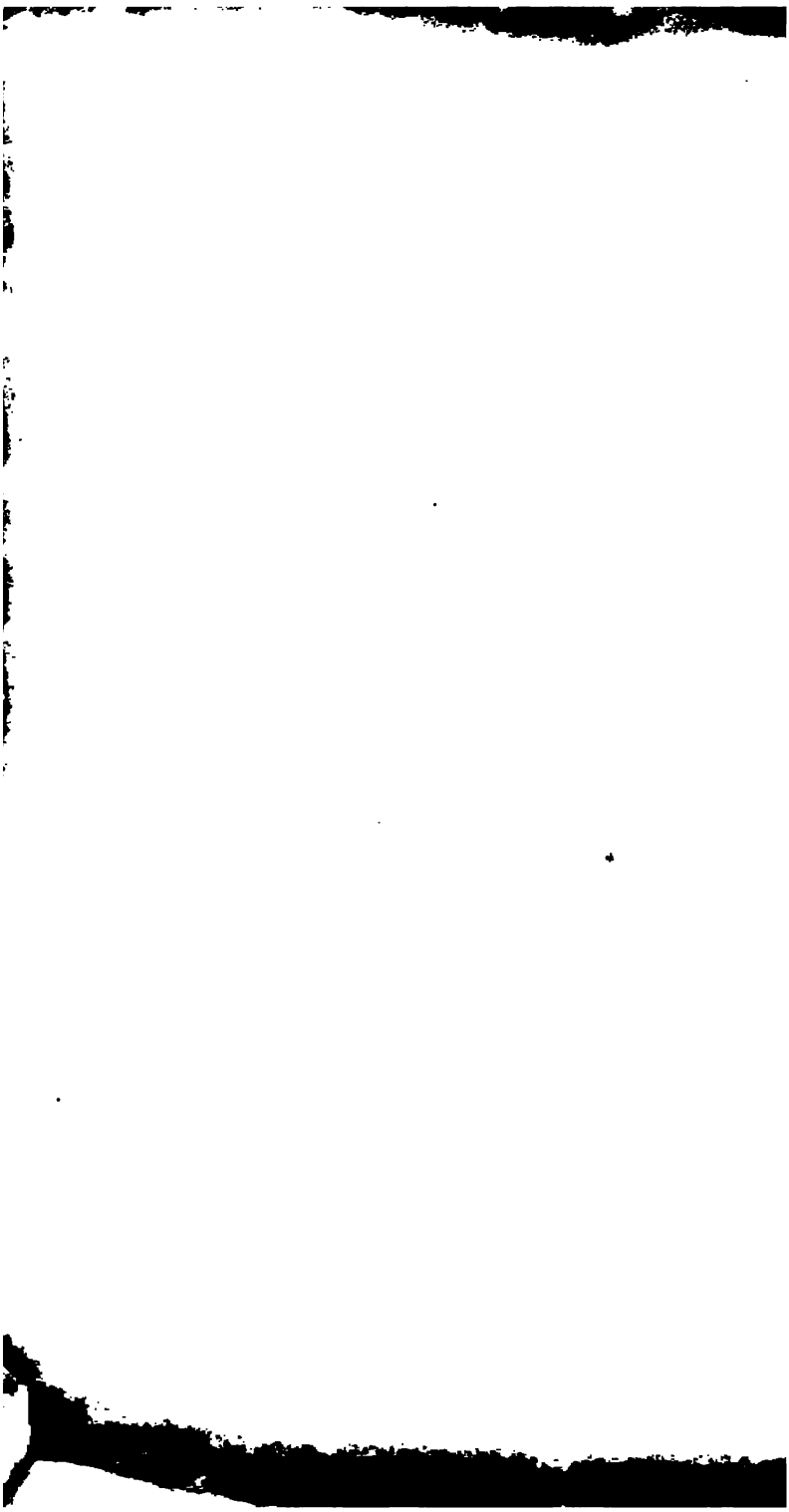

FORTY FAMILY SERMONS,

BY THE

EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

Edited by J. Pratt, Z. Macaulay, S. & W. Wilberforce, J. W. Cunningham, etc.?

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY J. HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXXX.

LIBRARY
NEW YORK

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

CHARLES RICHARD SUMNER, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,

PRELATE OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER,

AND

THE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN BIRD SUMNER, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER

("NULLA ADULATIO PROCEDERE ULTRA HOC NOMEN POTEST,
QUAM UT FRATRES VOCEMUS*"),

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

ARE, BY PERMISSION,

MOST RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR LORDSHIPS' MOST

OBEDIENT AND OBLIGED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

* Quint. Declam. 321.

PREFACE.

THE writer of the following sermons has for the last thirteen years been in the habit of composing every month (with few exceptions), for a periodical work under his care, a short, plain, and practical Sermon for Family Reading. The following forty are selected from this number, at the request of many valued friends, who thought it might be useful to reprint a portion of the CHRISTIAN-OBSERVER SERMONS in a separate volume, and with a larger type than that of a periodical publication. The want of Discourses adapted for Family perusal was greatly felt among religious members of the Church of England, at the time when the plan of inserting a sermon monthly in the Christian Observer originated, about twenty years since; and though, of late, volumes of sermons are constantly issuing from the press, highly valuable for the Scriptural character of their doctrine, and for their application to the life and conscience, and written by Clergymen warmly attached to our beloved Church; yet it is not in general found that Discourses originally composed for the pulpit are altogether fitted for perusal in the family circle. It is seldom that the whole of such an address is applicable to a private household; and usually, in reading it, some things are passed over, while others require to be supplied. Many of the discussions, much of the classification of cha-

racter, and some of the most pointed and pungent appeals, are couched in a style not adapted to the occasion; and even the beautiful pastoral appellation of "My brethren," gives to a sermon read in a family an air which is not natural.

These considerations will perhaps lead the reader to account for, if not to justify, the usual plan of the following discourses. That they are brief, and are attempted to be simple, and easily intelligible, and seldom or never controversial, needs no apology. That they should be chiefly elementary, embracing the leading points of Christian doctrine and practice, is what the writer wished, at least, to attain. That they are too calm, too little conversant with the striking illustrations and never-forgotten words which are sometimes heard in the pulpit, is partly the writer's defect, but it is also partly incidental; for a sermon written expressly to be read in families—perhaps often by a son or daughter, the whole audience being only the parents, children, and servants—would be wholly unsuitable if composed in a style very proper for the pulpit. Denunciations must often become persuasions; fervent appeals to various classes of character must often become rather Scriptural statements respecting such classes of character, since either the originals may not be present, or, if present, the application might be improperly personal; the pastoral authoritative "you," must sink into the modest "we;" and the whole assume the air of simple discussion, affectionate advice, gentle persuasion, and plain Scriptural instruction, rather than those elevated features which the family reader could not with propriety adopt, so as to make the sermon his own. This would be no excuse for want of faithfulness or earnestness, but it greatly modifies the style of conveying Scriptural truth.

The doctrines of these sermons correspond with those

which it has been the uniform object of the work in which they were inserted to maintain. It was thought that the chief topics for Family Sermons—and indeed all sermons—were such simple Scriptural points as the fallen, guilty, and helpless condition of mankind by nature; the love of God in Christ; the atonement; repentance; faith; justification; the offices of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; sanctification; peace with God; love to God; the forbearance of God; Christian obedience, and love to mankind; death, and eternity; heaven, and hell: and that they should not be discussed controversially, but practically, with constant application to the conscience, and prayer for the blessing of God.

It gives the writer singular satisfaction to have been allowed to avail himself of the honour of dedicating his pages to two Right Reverend Prelates, whose names are so greatly beloved and revered by the best friends of our Church and our common Christianity. It is not often that two such near relatives have been seen sitting side by side among our Prelates; brothers in office, as well as by birth, affection, and that higher brotherhood which shall never cease: and certainly in no instance has such a coincidence occurred more honourable to those who bore the office. But this is a topic on which the writer may not enter. It is not for him to echo the tribute of public respect and esteem so widely felt for that active zeal, those labours abundant, that professional ability, that amiable and courteous deportment, and, most of all, that deep and humble piety, and that attachment to the doctrines of the Gospel and the discipline of our revered Church, which have endeared the name of SUMNER to every wise and good man; and which filled the hearts of so many with gratitude to GOD, that the talents and spiritual virtues which had adorned subordinate stations in our ecclesiastical Zion were henceforth to be consecrated to the high and

Apostolical office of the Prelacy. It was said of Bossuet and Fenelon, "The one proves religion, the other makes you love it." The biographer of either of the two Sumners will not be obliged to dissever the characteristics.

As these Discourses may fall into the hands of some persons who are unacquainted with the periodical publication from which they are extracted, it may not be irrelevant to state a few particulars respecting that work. The writer of the present pages may the more properly give this recapitulation, as, though he has conducted the work for a period approaching towards half the term of its existence, he had no share in its formation or early management, but entered into the labours of others; to imitate whose spirit, to tread in whose steps, and to follow whose advice, he felt to be the best means of perpetuating the respectable patronage which it had received, and the measure of good which, by the blessing of God, it had effected.

The Christian Observer was commenced in the year 1802. The prospectus which announced its appearance stated that it was to be conducted by members, and upon the true principles, of the Established Church: such a publication, it was added, had long been wished for. The desire of the conductors was, "to embrace information upon general subjects with religious instruction, so as to furnish such an interesting view of religion, literature, and politics, free from the contamination of false principles, as a Clergyman might without scruple recommend to his parishioners, and a Christian safely introduce into his family." The chief object of the work, it was added, was "to promote the increase of sound theological knowledge, and to delineate the character of primitive and unadulterated Christianity." The conductors, as "members of the Established Church," proposed to discuss "the principles of that church,

and to explain and enforce the pious tendency of her rites, ceremonies, and liturgy;" at the same time avoiding those asperities of controversy which might diminish that Christian affection "which ought to unite the members of Christ of every denomination;" and making it their constant aim "to cherish the affections of charity, piety, and fervent devotion, and to direct their fellow-Christians in the paths of truth and righteousness."

The preface to the first volume states, that the work thus announced, had been received with a large measure of public favour, and with the most honourable testimonies to its usefulness, and promises of support, even some "in quarters where the conductors were not sanguine in expecting them." Tories alleged that it was Whig, and Whigs that it was Tory; Calvinists that it was Arminian, and Arminians that it was Calvinistic; some Dissenters called it High Church, and some High-Churchmen thought it too conciliating towards Dissenters: a proof, it was inferred, that truth, and not party, was the object which its supporters wished to follow.

In specifying more particularly the theological opinions of the conductors, it was stated, that, "while appealing only to the Scriptures as their directory, and to the formularies of the Church of England as the best human expositor," they found them fully unfolded in the writings of our Reformers; many of which—not then so well known as at present happily they are—were largely quoted from, or re-printed, in the early volumes of the work; particularly those which partake of the character of documents "received and allowed" by the church: such as Nowell's and King Edward's Catechisms, and Jewell's Apology. Edification, and not controversy, was the object of the publication: for it is stated, in the preface to the second volume, that, "earnestly desirous that men should learn that it is of

infinitely greater moment to be real Christians than acute controversialists, the conductors of the Christian Observer wish that their work should constantly exhibit the important doctrines of the ruined state of man by nature, and of his recovery by Divine Grace; of justification by faith, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; of the unsearchable love of Christ, and of the obligations of every one no longer to live to himself, but to Him who died for him;—that the uniform tendency of their publication should be to awaken the careless sinner; to encourage the penitent, and direct him where to look for pardon and peace; to enlighten the understanding, by a just display of the duties we owe to God and man; and to enforce upon the conscience the awful sanctions of the Gospel: then, whatever be the reception of their work in this world of darkness and error, it will not fail to meet with a favourable reception at His hands who came to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth."

Among the writers who have, regularly or occasionally, enriched the pages of the work by their correspondence and contributions, might be named many whose talents and piety stand in high honour among their countrymen. To those who still live it would not be decorous to allude; nor of those who have departed to a better world would the conductors publish any name which the individual or his friends have not themselves made public. Yet even a list thus limited would furnish no unfavourable sample; for obituaries and posthumous publications have, in various instances, shewn to whose pen the reader was to attribute valuable papers, or collections of papers, which had already greatly interested him under an anonymous signature. Among these might be specified Dr. Jowett*, the Rev.

* Dr. Jowett's papers on Biblical criticism, especially on the litigated passage 1 John v. 7, have been, and still are, highly valued by many eminent scholars.

J. Venn*, Mr. Henry Thornton†, Bishop Heber‡, Mr. J. Bowdler, jun.§, Mr. John Pearson, the Rev. T. Drewitt, the Rev. John Owen, the Rev. Thomas Scott, the Rev. Legh Richmond, Dr. Claudius Buchanan, Mr. Hey, and many others‖. In several instances, valuable works, with the names of living authors, are a republication with enlargements of papers in the Christian Observer: such as Mr. Babington's admirable work on Education; Hodgson's Letters on America,

* Among Mr. Venn's papers were a considerable number of most excellent family sermons.

† This distinguished statesman, whose deep and unaffected piety and unwearied activity in every work of Christian benevolence, were as remarkable as that enlightened judgment and powerful mind which, in conjunction with higher qualities, rendered him so great a blessing to the world, was one of the most considerable and valuable contributors to the work.

‡ Bishop Heber first inserted in the Christian Observer a number of those beautiful hymns on the Church Fasts and Festivals which are contained in the volume of his Hymns, published since his death, but prepared by himself for publication.

§ See his "Remains;" a work which, notwithstanding the high tone of scriptural piety of the writer, extorted, by its talent, from the rival Quarterly Reviews of London and Edinburgh the highest encomiums. The papers which the reviewers chiefly lauded, and wondered where they could have appeared, were extracted from the Christian Observer.

‖ See the Memoir of Mr. Scott, by the Rev. J. Scott; of Mr. Richmond, by the Rev. T. S. Grimshawe; of Dr. Buchanan, by the present Dean of Salisbury; and of Mr. Hey, by the late John Pearson, Esq.: in which many of their papers are alluded to or republished. Mr. Pearson (himself a most valuable contributor to the Christian Observer), in mentioning Mr. Hey's papers in its pages, says, "This periodical work has now been so many years in circulation, that its merits may be safely left to speak for themselves: and although it has participated in the lot of many other useful productions—that of being misunderstood by some, misrepresented by others, and opposed by the enemies of the faith and hope of the Gospel—yet it has surmounted all opposition, and, through the Divine assistance, has been eminently and extensively beneficial both to the clergy and laity of this kingdom. The Christian Observer has displayed good temper, and a spirit of moderation and candour, towards the various denominations of Christians: it has demonstrated that genuine and fervent piety may exist without ignorance or fanaticism; that polemical discussions may be conducted without railing, bitterness, or asperity; and that sobriety of mind and cautious investigation are not hostile to purity of faith or soundness of doctrine. Above all, the Christian Observer has been the unwearied and zealous advocate of scriptural morality: it has enlarged

which Americans state to be the most correct and candid book which has ever been written in England on the subject; the Rev. C. Bridges's valuable work on the Causes of the Inefficiency of the Christian Ministry, especially in the Church of England (a work of great piety and spiritual utility); Mr. Riland's faithful and powerful delineation of "Antichrist;" and Mr. Newnham's able and interesting treatise on Superstition. Others might be added; but the object is not to swell a list of names, but merely to mention as a specimen some of the pieces which happen to occur to the writer. —The value of a periodical publication must, however, chiefly depend upon its ordinary contributors; and living names, much as he values their favours, the Editor is not allowed to specify.—But far the greatest tribute of affection and gratitude, from the friends of the work, is due to one individual, who conducted it for more than half the period of its present duration, and gave to it that character, whatever it may be, which has prevented the necessity for new plans or a new series, and has stamped on it the claim of being at least a consistent work. Long may it be before, not only the friends of the Christian Observer, but of no small number of our great religious societies—the friends of injured Africa, the friends of the oppressed slave, the friends of education, and piety, and philanthropy throughout the world—will be at liberty to say all they think and feel in reference to the zealous and judicious labours of that esteemed and highly-gifted individual.

on the extent and holiness of the Divine law; rescued the preceptive parts of the Gospel from the cold, heartless, insipid commentaries of those who would reduce Christianity to a round of formal observances, and a decent conformity to social duties; and, by inculcating the necessity of combining spiritual affections with an orderly and correct practice, it has laboured to convey and excite the most enlarged, noble, generous, and animated conceptions of the nature and genius of true religion: and it has pleased God to bless its endeavours with an abundant success."

Numerous testimonies to the character of the work, and the benefits which, by the blessing of God, have attended its perusal, might be adduced from the writings of individuals, living and dead, whose approbation is honour. One may be the rather mentioned, as the writer is in a better world, and his approval was beyond the suspicion of partiality, he being neither a fellow-countryman nor a member of our own communion. Dr. Dwight, the revered and lamented President of Yale College, Connecticut, united with some other well-known friends of religion to introduce the Christian Observer to his countrymen, among whom it obtained so much celebrity that it was soon regularly reprinted every month, in two rival editions, at New York and Boston; and it has been the model on which several American religious publications, particularly in the Episcopal Church, have been professedly planned and conducted. The following is a copy of Dr. Dwight's recommendatory address:—

"The publishers of the American edition of the Christian Observer having requested of me a recommendation of that work to the public, I take a peculiar pleasure in complying with their wishes. I have taken this work from its commencement, and throughout the whole of its continuance have considered it as the best periodical publication within my knowledge. It has also been more uniformly supported than any other production of a similar nature. The religious doctrines countenanced by the Editor and his principal supporters are generally those of the Reformation. In a few particulars they differ somewhat from the most generally-received orthodoxy of this country: on these, however, they rarely insist. Those in which the creeds and confessions of Protestant churches have chiefly united, they illustrate and defend with distinguished ability. The spirit which reigns in this work is, I think, singularly happy. Catholicism and zeal are, perhaps, no where more successfully united. The piety of the Gospel is here

strongly as well as amiably displayed; and even controversy is carried on without tarnishing the Christian character. The subordinate contributors, imbibing the disposition of the principal, proceed in the same course of moderation and excellence. The plan of the work includes Religious and Miscellaneous Communications, Reviews, Literary and Philosophical Intelligence, a View of Public Affairs, &c. &c. The heads are well chosen, and are filled up with advantage. The re-publication of this work in America is a public benefit, and reflects honour on the undertakers."

Many similar testimonies from foreigners might be mentioned; but we shall adduce only the following, from the pen of the late Baron de Staël, which we must not omit, lest our Protestant friends on the continent of Europe should think we value their obliging suffrages less than those of their Western brethren. That excellent and beloved nobleman, it is well known, was exceedingly anxious to extend the religious literature of England to France and Switzerland. The following passage from his pen appears in the records of the "Société de la Morâle Chrêtienne:"—"Le plus important des ouvrages que j'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer est la collection, dès le commencement, du *Christian Observer*, ecrit périodique fort répandu en Angleterre, où il exerce depuis plusieurs années une grande et salutaire influence. Je suis assuré d'avance, Messieurs, qu'en parcourant le *Christian Observer* vous y reconnaitrez avec bonheur l'union du sentiment religieux le plus intime avec des vues liberales sur toutes les grandes questions de la politique; et j'ose croire que vous penserez comme moi, qu'il serait fort important pour notre Société de recevoir désormais les numéros de ce journal à mesure qu'ils paraitront."

It is peculiarly gratifying to the conductors, that a work which approved itself to a Porteus and a Barrington in our own church, should, without shrinking

from the expression of what a Dwight or a De Staël might think exclusive principles, have commended itself to their suffrages by the spirit in which they were advocated.

Among the subjects which have occupied a prominent place in the work, there are some on which its conductors look back with peculiar interest. At the period when they commenced their labours, Europe appeared to be sinking under one vast overpowering despotism: infidelity and irreligion were also spoiling men of their eternal hopes; and few and feeble were the efforts to counteract their influence. Our own church had not awakened to those zealous labours which now so widely animate her members. The doctrines of the Reformation were very inadequately insisted upon by her clergy: and, with the exception of two or three of the older societies, reduced almost to the torpor of the surrounding mass, scarcely any thing was done to educate the poor, to send the Gospel to the heathen, or to better the general condition of mankind. Our vast foreign possessions were almost destitute of religious instruction; and the vessels which now leave our shores freighted with Tracts and Bibles and Missionaries, or with the productions of a peaceful commerce, were then seen bearing down with warlike equipments, or with chains and cruel arms to desolate Africa. On all these points the eye of a Christian Observer could not but be intently and painfully fixed; and not a few of the pages of this work have been devoted to them. The exposition of the horrors of the slave trade, and, since its abolition, of slavery, at once its source and its fruit; the opening of India to missionary instruction, and the formation of a church-establishment for that immense empire*, and

* The Dean of Salisbury, in his highly interesting life of Dr. Buchanan, after alluding to the memorable controversy which took place, relative to the duty and practicability of introducing Christianity into India, and forming an ecclesiastical establishment for that country, is

also for our other colonies; the important discussions relative to the doctrines of our Reformers and our Church; the points at issue with ourDissenting brethren, with the Church of Rome, and also those which divide the members of our own communion; the interpretation of the inspired prophecies (on which not a few of the chief writers who have turned their minds to this subject during the last thirty years have, anonymously or by name, stated their views through the medium of the Christian Observer); obituaries and memoirs of persons eminent for piety in our own and former times, including many original notices, which have rendered this department of the work one of its most interesting and valuable portions; the painful, but ultimately useful, controversies which arose out of those plans of Christian benevolence which began about the period of the commencement of our publication (particularly the Bible Society, and the education of all classes of the poor)—these and similar topics of discussion have employed many a page—not, it is hoped, without benefit—of this miscellany. Bad as is the world, defective as are our best institutions, far as our own clergy and laity are from perfection, and dimly distant as still appears the prospect of a Millennium; much, very much, has been effected during the present century, in which the Christian and the philanthropist must greatly rejoice.—In the course of their labours, the conductors of the Christian Observer have had to record, among numerous other subjects of interest to all who are anxious for the glory of God and the welfare of mankind, the struggles and the triumph

pleased to add:—"It would be unjust to close this brief enumeration of the principal writers in this controversy, without mentioning the eminent services of one periodical publication, distinguished by the zeal and ability with which it originally embraced and steadily supported the great cause of Christianity in India. It is scarcely necessary to add the name of the *Christian Observer*, which, whether in the examination of the productions on either side of the question, or in original communications, may justly claim a very considerable share of the praise which belongs to its successful termination."

which signalized the abolition of the African slave-trade; the opening of the East to Christian instruction; the emancipation of Europe from a military usurpation; the wide diffusion of just principles of liberty; the increased attention devoted to moral and political economy, with a view to better the condition of mankind; the modern reviviscence and extension of several societies which had previously existed for the promotion of religious and benevolent objects throughout the world; and the origin and wonderful progress of those more recent Bible and Missionary Institutions which have now taken fast root in every quarter of the globe, all simultaneously operating to hasten on the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; the astonishing progress of education under the system of mutual instruction—the vast powers of which were unknown to Europe till long within the period of which we are speaking—and the societies formed to diffuse its benefits throughout the world, and the important results of their exertions: and, besides all this, societies for the conversion of the Jews, societies for promoting virtue and suppressing vice, societies literary and philosophical, mendicity societies, savings banks and friendly societies, anti-slavery societies, Prayer-Book and Homily societies, prison discipline societies, church-building societies, colonization societies for the outcasts of Africa, societies for assisting indigent clergymen, societies for improving the condition of the poor—to say nothing of numerous institutions of a more limited kind, which have for their object the relief of various calamities incident to our fallen humanity. Nor is it the least pleasing feature of the events which we have witnessed and recorded, that our own clergy are enlisting themselves in increasing numbers under those Scriptural banners which the Martyrs and Reformers of our church delighted to bear; and that of her laity, also, multitudes, influenced by Christian mo-

tives, aspire to assist in the general extension of religious knowledge. It is comparatively little, that any particular publication may have been enabled to contribute towards these glorious results; but each has its own circle of influence; and the conductors of the Christian Observer would hope, that a work conscientiously, however feebly, devoted to these objects, could not have been so long continued and so widely circulated without conducing, by the blessing of God, in some humble measure, to the end proposed. Indeed, scarcely a month elapses without their receiving communications, many of them from persons now occupying eminent posts of usefulness in the public eye, which prove that "their labours have not been in vain in the Lord." This is their consolation, and this, it is trusted, will animate them to renewed and persevering exertion.

While this Preface is passing through the press, the Editor has received many communications approving of the design of publishing a selection from the Family Sermons, and expressing much interest in the Christian Observer. He has great pleasure in subjoining, with the kind permission of the writers, the two following, from two much esteemed and venerated friends,—Mr. Wilberforce and Mrs. Hannah More.

"My dear sir,—I have heard, with very great pleasure, of your intention to collect into a volume a selection of the Sermons dispersed throughout that very valuable periodical, the Christian Observer, thus rescuing from the mass those sound and excellent portions of Divinity, and presenting them to the public in a compendium, which will be a real acquisition to it. The volume will be most acceptable to many of your readers, not only for their own use, but to present to families in which the Christian Observer is hitherto unknown. I have taken this work from the very beginning, and I continue to prize it as highly as I have ever done, and count its *now long* range of volumes not among the least valuable part of my library.

"I am, dear sir, with much esteem,

"Yours faithfully,

"HANNAH MORE."

"My dear sir,—I have heard with great pleasure that you are about to publish a volume of the Sermons that for a long period have constituted each one article in every Number of the Christian Observer; for with such of the sermons as have been read to me (the weakness of my eyes preventing my reading them myself) I have been much pleased. Would you not also extract some other articles from the Christian Observer? I know of no publication of the kind which contains so many of superior merit. The cause I have just specified has, to my regret, rendered me less acquainted with the Christian Observer than I formerly was; but I think so highly of it, and of the many excellent Contributors to it (many of them, alas! friends, that are now no more), that I must rejoice in any circumstance which will be likely to draw it into augmented notice.

"I am, my dear sir,

"Yours, very sincerely,

"W. WILBERFORCE."

The great augmentation of the number of the religious charitable societies forbidding the detail of their important transactions, at the length they deserve, in the body of the work, a plan was adopted in 1828 of appending some of the chief documents in full, as published by the societies themselves. This plan has given great satisfaction to all parties. At the mere cost of the paper and print, societies are thus enabled to communicate very widely with the public; many of the readers being their own subscribers, who would never otherwise see their occasional or periodical papers; and others, persons not connected with the society, who thus become interested in its proceedings. The papers are also thus preserved, after being read, and at the end of the year may be bound up by themselves, a title-page being given for the purpose. The documents thus rescued will form an interesting series for future reference. New subscribers wishing to begin with the volumes commencing with these documents (namely, 1828 and 1829), may, *for the present*, obtain copies complete: but should it ever be necessary to reprint the whole or part of these volumes, the appended papers cannot, of course, be inserted.

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Ephes. iii. 20, 21.—Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

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SERMON VIII.

JOB'S SEEING GOD.

Job xlii. 5, 6.—I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

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SERMON IX.

CHARACTER AND BENEFITS OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

Heb. xiii. 1.—Let brotherly love continue.

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SERMON X.

DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

Acts ix. 6.—And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

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SERMON XI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST.

Ephes. iii. 9, 10.—And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

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SERMON XII.

JOB'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND PRAYER.

Job x.12–16.—Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction, for it increaseth.

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SERMON XIII.

CHANGING OUR GOD.

Jer. ii. 11.—Hath any nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

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SERMON XIV.

DYING IN FAITH.

Heb. xi. 13.—These all died in faith.

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SERMON XV.

THE ORIGIN, SINFULNESS, AND PUNISHMENT OF FALSEHOOD.

Acts v. 3, 4.—But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

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SERMON XVI.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 *John* i. 3.—Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Page 193.

SERMON XVII.

GOD'S SPEAKING TO MAN.

Job xxxiii. 14.—God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. Page 206.

SERMON XVIII.

THE HEAVENLY INHABITANTS.

Rev. vii. 14–17.—And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Page 217.

SERMON XIX.

HEROD'S WISH TO SEE CHRIST.

Luke ix. 9.—And Herod said, John I have beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him. Page 229.

SERMON XX.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

Luke xxiv. 22.—And they said one to another, Did yot our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? Page 240.

SERMON XXI.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Luke xv. 24.—This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. Page 254.

SERMON XXII.

THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

1 *John* iii. 8.—He that committeth sin is of the devil. Page 267.

SERMON XXIII.

CHRIST MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION.

1 *Cor.* i. 30.—Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... sanctification. Page 279.

SERMON XXIV.

THE MERCIES OF GOD IN CHRIST.

Ephes. ii. 4–7.—But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Page 292.

SERMON XXV.

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD.

Romans xi. 22.—Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. Page 304.

SERMON XXVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

1 *Cor.* xv. 53, 54.—For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality: so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Page 316.

SERMON XXVII.

THE JOY IN SAMARIA.

Acts viii. 8.—And there was great joy in that city.

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SERMON XXVIII.

OUR LORD'S WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

Luke xix. 41, 42.—And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes. Page 340.

SERMON XXIX.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

Matt. v. 20.—For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

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SERMON XXX.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE AND SACRIFICE.

1 *Pet.* ii. 21.—Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Page 363.

SERMON XXXI.

IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING GOD IN OUR THOUGHTS.

Psalm x. 4.—God is not in all his thoughts.

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SERMON XXXII.

ST. PAUL READY TO BE OFFERED.

2 *Timothy* iv. 6–8.—I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.

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SERMON XXXIII.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Ephes iv. 30.—Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

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SERMON XXXIV.

THE SIN, AFFLICTION, AND RESTORATION OF MANASSEH.

2 *Chron.* xxiii. 12, 13.—And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.

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SERMON XXXV.

THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

Heb. xi. 24-26.—By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect to the recompence of the reward.

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SERMON XXXVI.

ACQUAINTING OURSELVES WITH GOD.

Job xxii. 21-23.—Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up. Thou shalt put iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

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SERMON XXXVII.

FAITH PURIFYING THE HEART.

Acts xv. 9.—And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

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SERMON XXXVIII.

SPIRITUAL MEDITATION.

Psalm civ. 34.—My meditation of Him shall be sweet.

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SERMON XXXIX.

DEBT AND GRACE.

Rom. iv. 4, 5.—Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

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SERMON XL.

THE LAST WORDS OF THE SAVIOUR.

Luke xxiii. 46.—And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

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SERMON I.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

ISAIAH XXXviii. 16.

O Lord, by these things men live; and in these is the life of the spirit.

OF what things does Hezekiah speak? Let us inquire into his station and condition in life; for these may, perhaps, assist us in answering the question. Hezekiah was a rich and prosperous king: he smote the Philistines in battle, and saw the Assyrians, his powerful enemies, cut off by the angel of the Lord. It is said that he had "a house of precious things, silver, and gold, and spices, and precious ointments, and the house of his armour." He came to the throne in the prime of life, at the age of twenty-five, and, doubtless, in full possession of health and strength to give the highest zest to all the pleasures of an eastern court.

And now, perhaps, we are ready to exclaim, "It is evident of what things the monarch spake when he said, 'By these things men live,

and in these is the life of the spirit.' Surrounded by the dignities of rank, the refinements of elegance, and the gratifications of voluptuousness, he, doubtless, viewed these as the very end and delight of his being, and wished for nothing, knew of nothing, better or beyond them. He was amused, and was content; he was stimulated by pleasure, and was happy. Flattered and caressed, with every mode of self-indulgence in his power, he enjoyed the present, and saw no impending cloud to darken or disturb the future."

No; very different was his character; very different were the things of which he spake. These words were not uttered in "the house of his armour," but in the chamber of his sickness; not at the festive table of his royal banquets, but upon the couch of lassitude and pain. The chapter before us begins with the portentous words: "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death." The following is added as his soliloquy, when he had been sick and was recovered from his sickness: "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off

like a weaver my life. He will cut me off with pining sickness. From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning that as a lion so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward. I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul."

What an affecting picture of misery! His life like the tent of an Arab in the desert, frail and capable of being removed or blown away in an instant! or, like the work of the weaver, beautiful in texture, rich in decorations, flowers and figures rising in gay profusion on every side: but suddenly it is cut off—the thread is broken—the loom is destroyed. Yet it was of *such* things, of weakness and affliction, of sickness and of pain, of desertion and despair, that the humbled monarch spake when he said, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in these is the life of the spirit."

Let us endeavour, by a few examples, to verify his pensive contemplation; and this not with a view to excite useless sorrow, or to throw an unnecessary gloom over the gay images which we so fondly connect with this transient life, but for a holier and better end—that, with the inspired Psalmist, we may "so

learn to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

And, first, let us take the case of a professed scoffer at religion; a being of violent passions and brutal manners, who fears neither God nor man, and defies both to do their worst. He is arrested, we will suppose, by the arm of Omnipotence, in his profligate course; he is thrown by a stronger hand than his own upon the couch of pain and dejection; he learns for the first time to tremble; he is dismayed—God has brought him to himself. He feels his awful condition; and eagerly asks, "How shall I escape the condemnation of hell?" We will not picture all the steps of his future progress: we will suppose him softened, humbled, converted; conducted by the Holy Spirit to newness of life and faith as it is in Jesus; adoring the God whom he once blasphemed, and loving the Saviour whom he so lately reviled. And whence arose this happy, this unexpected change? Sanctified affliction was the first step. This softened the stony ground: this prepared the heart for holy impressions. "Before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he keeps God's word." And will not such an one be ready to exclaim with Hezekiah, "By these things men live, and by these is the life of the spirit?"

But, to take a somewhat less marked but not less decisive instance, imagine a man careless and indifferent to religion, though not a hardened scoffer against it. He is too busy with the world and the things of the world to spend a thought upon his eternal safety. Day succeeds to day, and night to night, without one serious reflection. Death and eternity, heaven and hell, are words that seldom reach his ears, and never disturb his repose. But God brings him low. In the silence and solitude of affliction he is *forced* to think. He inquires who and what he is; for what he was sent into the world, and how he may be happy when he leaves it. The companions that drove serious thought from his mind are now absent; he begins to recover from the perpetual giddiness of his former life; he reads, he meditates, he prays; and God in his mercy appoints the chamber of sickness to teach him lessons which he had never learned in the noisy walks of business, or amidst the overpowering allurements of pleasure. What cause will such a one have for ever to bless Him who wounds that he may heal, who kills that he may make alive!

Again; let us imagine an inconsistent backsliding Christian brought into deep affliction. He finds that his uncertain profession now profits him nothing. The comforts and repose

which he looked forward to have vanished. He feels guilt and distress in his conscience. He perceives that he has acted unwisely and ungratefully; that he has been crucifying his Saviour afresh, and putting him to an open shame. There was a time when the candle of the Lord shone brightly around his path; but now he is in darkness and dismay. He has not lived up to his high privileges, and, therefore, does not now enjoy their blessings. He finds, to use a scriptural expression, that he has forsaken his first love, and has been daily approaching nearer and nearer to that world which he had professedly forsaken. But affliction sets him to think; he begins to inquire wherefore God thus contends with him, and conscience soon whispers the cause. He returns to him whom he had forsaken; and God says of him, "I will heal his backslidings, I will receive him graciously, I will love him freely." Thus his religion becomes strengthened and confirmed; he walks more closely than ever with his God; and though after his affliction he may, like Hezekiah, "go softly"—that is, in pain and dejection of mind or body—all his days, yet he will long have to remember with gratitude the affliction that gave a turn to the ebbing tide, and made it flow anew with love and gratitude and devotion to his Heavenly Parent.

Look again at the Pharisee. He has covered himself during the season of prosperity with the flimsy robe of his self-righteousness. But God brings him into distress, within sight of death and eternity. His sins spring up with new aggravations before his eyes; his self-confidence is broken; his best virtues cannot stand the withering glance of the Divine displeasure. He is unmasked to himself, and begins to exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?" His language is no longer, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" but, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." Thus he is brought into the true posture for the reception of mercy. God waiteth to be gracious to such a one; and having prepared the heart for the good seed of the word of eternal life, he will cause it to take root downward, and grow upward to the praise and glory of his own Name. What a blessing, then, has affliction been to such a character! It has been the means of shewing him all that was in his heart, and of thus leading him to a better righteousness than his own for pardon and acceptance with God.

And to take but one example more,—that of the dejected Christian. How often has such a one had reason to exclaim of afflictions, that "by these things men live!" The season of weakness and distress is often that which God

employs for the brightest manifestations of his love and tenderness. He often sees fit, in proportion as the earthly house of this tabernacle is undergoing dissolution, to bring into lively prospect that "building of God," that "house, not made with hands," which is "eternal in the heavens." Supported by heavenly consolations, the mourner is often led to see the kindness as well as wisdom of the Divine dispensations; so as to be willing, if he had his choice, to take the bitter with the sweet, rather than lose the lessons and the blessings which they were designed in conjunction to convey. St. Paul no longer prayed for deliverance from the "thorn in the flesh," when he had experienced the truth of the Divine assertion, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The chamber of sickness and affliction thus seems oftentimes to be the very gate of heaven. God then brings the sufferer into closer union with himself, and gives him to feel the value and power of true religion. Many a dejected Christian, who dreaded the hour of trial, has found, when it approached, that God has made a way for his deliverance. In the season of pain, or sickness, or affliction, his spiritual graces have matured; love and faith, patience and gratitude, have had their perfect work. The spiritual consolations which would not flourish when all around was prosperous, have begun to gain

new vigour in the storms of adversity and the night of affliction. As other sources have dried up, the fountain of living waters has become more valuable. And thus the dejected Christian, instead of exclaiming as before, "All these things are against me," has been often obliged to say with the Psalmist, "Truly God is good to Israel:" his mourning is turned into joy, and his dejection into a hope full of immortality and glory. The body may be oppressed, and the mind afflicted, but the soul is sustained and comforted. "By these is the life of *the spirit*."

It would be easy to point out many other ways in which afflictions produce the effect attributed to them by Hezekiah. They try what is in our heart, whether we will keep God's commandments or not. They deaden us to the world, and thus leave us in a fit attitude for spiritual blessings. They humble our pride, and teach us to think lowly of ourselves. Thus they render us milder and more considerate to others, and allay the irritation of our natural self-importance. They teach us to be habitually ready for new calamities; they prepare us for the approach of sickness, and death, and judgment.

It must, however, be remembered that affliction has no *natural* tendency to produce these "peaceable fruits of righteousness." It

is only when sanctified to us by the Holy Spirit, and received with humility and a desire to learn the lessons which they were intended to teach, that troubles become spiritually useful to the sufferer. Affliction, where it does not soften the mind and lead us to God, usually hardens it, and drives us from him. A proud and impatient spirit will prevent all the advantages of the Divine chastisements. We must humble ourselves, therefore, under his mighty hand, if we would desire that his providential inflictions should be rendered beneficial to our souls. Our language should be, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it:" or like that of the pious Reformer, Luther, who said in his affliction, "Lord, lay what burden thou seest fit upon me, only let thy everlasting arms be my support; strike and spare not, for I am submissive to thy will: I have learned to say Amen to thy Amen." Affliction, coming upon a mind thus prepared, will be like dew upon the hill of Hermon: it will improve and fertilize a barren soil, and by the Divine blessing produce an abundant harvest of the fruits of the Spirit, to the praise and glory of God.

Let us, then, view our "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," in their proper aspect; as designed to promote our spiritual life, and to fit us for an eternal world. Then

may we say, with a venerable prelate of our church, "Before sorrow comes, I will prepare for it; when it is come, I will welcome it; when it departs, I will take but half a farewell of it, as expecting its return." The great privilege of the Christian is to be fitted to bear all events, by knowing that He to whom he has committed himself and his concerns, is the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. To him let us devote ourselves as unto a faithful Creator; and then, whatever may be our lot here, we shall be safe for eternity, and prepared "for the inheritance of the saints in light."

SERMON II.

CHARACTER OF ABIJAH.

1 KINGS XIV. 12, 13.

The child shall die; and all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

THE child, or young person, spoken of in the text, was Abijah, a son, and probably the eldest son, of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel after the separation of the ten tribes from Judah and Benjamin. His father was a man of notoriously irreligious principles, who is frequently mentioned in Scripture as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who did sin, and made Israel to sin." Very different was the character of his son, who seems to have been a child of great promise, beloved both of God and of man. But neither his tender age nor his endearing qualities, neither his exalted rank nor his opening piety and virtues, could rescue the princely

youth from the calamities entailed by sin upon our fallen humanity. "Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, fell sick," and his sickness appeared unto death. In this extremity, the father, overwhelmed doubtless with affliction at the sufferings and danger of his child, and dreading, perhaps, lest his fond projects and ambitious hopes respecting the succession to his throne should be blasted by the death of this the heir to his newly attained honours, directed his wife, the mother of Abijah, to proceed in disguise to Shiloh, to inquire of the prophet of the Lord "what should become of the child." Fearful, alas! were the tidings that met the ear of the trembling mother, as her footstep sounded on the threshold of the prophet's habitation. The man of God could not behold her, "for his eyes were set by reason of age;" but there was One above, to whom all hearts are open, and who can penetrate the darkest disguise; and, forewarned of her coming by his Divine inspiration, the prophet accosted her as the wife of Jeroboam, and poured forth into her ear the unerringly predicted doom that awaited her ungodly household. "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made

thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee; and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; but hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back: therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam." Truly, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Every member of this idolatrous house, except Abijah, who alone seems to have escaped the evil contagion, was to be swept away by a violent end;—an event which took place within two years from the death of Jeroboam, when Baasha utterly exterminated the family. Abijah was rescued from the impending calamity, by an early and peaceful dismissal to that better world "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest." The predictions in the text were fulfilled: the child died, and all Israel mourned for him and buried him; and he only of Jeroboam came to the grave, because in him there was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

The short history of this young person,

faithful only found among his unfaithful relatives, presents to us three points worthy of particular consideration; namely,

First, The great religious disadvantages under which he laboured;

Secondly, The conscientiousness of principle with which he appears to have borne up against them; and,

Thirdly, The favour which God was pleased to shew to his early piety.

First. The first point which occurs, in perusing the narrative before us, is the serious disadvantages of a religious kind which this youthful prince seems to have encountered. How small, comparatively, is the number of those who, with every religious privilege within their reach, are willing to forego their worldly pleasures or interests for the sake of the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!" In our own highly favoured age and country the means of spiritual improvement are open to all: the Bible is, or may be, in every hand, and whosoever will may drink of the fountain of life; and no bonds, no pains, no public disgrace or punishment, are attached to a profession of Christianity: yet, with all these disadvantages, how few are decided for God, how few care for their immortal interests, how few heed the salvation of their souls! In

many instances, the instructions and restraints of a Christian education, the prayers and entreaties of friends, the beauties and allurements of religion, the remonstrances of conscience, and the admonitions of God's word, all combine in vain to soften the heart and induce the transgressor to take heed to his ways. But Abijah had few such advantages; for, in the first place,

He was the son of a proverbially wicked father. His education was in the mysteries of a blasphemous and senseless idolatry: the example of his parent, and all the surrounding circumstances of his childhood, were such as to favour the growth of every evil propensity, and to choke every opening virtue in the bud. We have no reason to suppose that his mother, or any of his relations or connexions, exhibited a better pattern: we hear of no prayers poured forth for his spiritual welfare; no early instructions to melt his infant heart. He stood single in a wicked family, and contrary to the whole course of education and example. To add to this,

He was a prince. His temptations were therefore great: he was exposed to the seductions of pomp and passion: there were many to caress him, many to flatter him, many to encourage him in every evil way; but none, that we read of, to warn him, to guide him, or

to oppose his inclinations, however wayward. If he was vain, there was much to flatter his vanity; if proud, his pride had ample scope for exercise; if a lover of pleasure, there were all the allurements of a court to attract him. True religion alone was unpopular; the ways of God alone were unfashionable; but in every other course, all that riches and power and public estimation could afford, was within his grasp. To complete his disadvantages,

He was a child; that is, a minor, or young person. His character could scarcely have been formed; he had not grown inured to temptation; he was open to "youthful lusts which war against the soul." He might have urged the example and solicitations of his elders; he might have pleaded that God could not require, from one so young, so great a sacrifice. There was time enough, he might have said, for him to think of religion; but youth was the season of careless mirth; and why should he alone stand out against all that he saw his gay companions enjoying?

Such were his disadvantages.

Secondly. We are now to consider that conscientiousness of principle with which he appears to have been enabled to bear up against these disadvantages. This is shortly but expressively intimated in the expression, "In

him there is found some good thing towards the Lord of God of Israel." The extent of his piety, or of his sacrifices for conscience sake, is not particularly mentioned; and there might even be some considerable defects in his character; but still there was "some good thing in him towards God." His religious principles, if not wholly matured, were yet ingenuous and hopeful: he had very probably shewn an early abhorrence of the idolatry into which his family and nation had fallen, and had determined, if ever he came to the throne, to suppress it, and to restore the pure worship of the one true God. It was said of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, as of the subject of this narrative, that "there were good things found in him;" and these good things were, that he had taken the groves of idolatry out of the land, and prepared his heart to seek God. And such, we may conclude, were the "good things" meditated and begun to be put in practice by the young prince Abijah. Under the secret teaching of the Holy Spirit, amidst many difficulties and temptations, he doubtless "prepared his heart to seek God;" he remembered his Creator in the days of his youth; he mourned over the idolatry of his native land, and resolved to extirpate it. He seems to have been one of those youthful servants of God, who, like John the Baptist, were sanctified from the birth; or, like Timothy,

had from a child known and loved the Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. His religion was clearly a principle engrafted in his heart, "a good thing in him towards God;" and springing from such a principle, it must have shewn itself in love to God's commands and to his worship. Religious principle in the soul is the only solid basis of any thing truly good; and where it dwells, there of necessity also must dwell the exalted graces of a renewed and heavenly character. Can we, then, doubt that the effects of the religion of this young person were seen in his conduct, or that his faith was proved by his works? The tender anxiety of his wicked father, and the deep lamentations and regrets of the people at his early death, serve strongly to prove that his life and disposition had been pious and just, dutiful and amiable; and the statement, that there was some good thing in him towards the Lord God, points out the spring of that exemplary conduct which so justly gained him the respect and affections of the people. He seems, in short, to have been circumstanced in a manner very similar to Moses in the court of Pharaoh, and to have acted on the same principle. Both Moses and Abijah might have enjoyed whatever the power and affluence of royalty could have afforded; and they had

every natural inducement to do so; but by faith they beheld things invisible and eternal; and their belief in what God had revealed, the implicit credit they gave to the Divine promises and threatenings, had so powerful an influence in silencing the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that they both chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," esteeming the very "reproach of Christ" to be greater riches than the most splendid treasures of an earthly court; and this not without abundant reason, for they "had respect to the recompence of the reward."

Thirdly. Having thus considered the great religious disadvantages under which Abijah laboured, and the conscientiousness of principle with which he appears to have borne up against them, we are, thirdly, to remark the favour which God was pleased to shew to his early piety. In our ignorance of the counsels of the Almighty, we might have hoped that this rising ornament and glory of his nation would have been long spared, a blessing to himself and to the people committed to his charge. But God's ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts. He had a better portion in reserve for Abijah than to be an

earthly prince or conqueror, and in mercy he rescued him from the perils of his exalted, but dangerous, station; and, we cannot doubt, translated him to a brighter than any earthly crown,—to a crown of immortality in heaven. The threatenings of Jehovah concerning his family and nation could not be reversed: Israel was to be smitten as a reed is shaken in the water, and to be rooted up and scattered; and there was no repentance, no supplication, no turning to God, on the part of the offenders, to avert the approaching wrath: the happiest lot, therefore, for this tender plant, was to be sheltered before the coming storm. And who can tell also, whether, as respected his own principles, there was not great mercy displayed in this his early dismissal to a world of eternal safety? For he was young, and exposed to powerful temptations; and the "good thing" which was in him might have melted away before the sunshine of prosperity, or been choaked by the cares of life and the allurements of pleasure and ambition. He was kept therefore from the peril. His early youth had been his appointed scene of trial; he had been enabled to overcome, and to endure to the end; and before he had advanced to manhood he was rescued from a world of change and temptation, and placed, as a pillar in the temple of God, to go out no more for ever. Not, indeed, that

the power and grace of God are ever wanting upon earth to protect any of his servants, who, feeling their own weakness, look up to Him for strength; but, taking the declarations of Scripture and the experience of life as we find them, and observing how many spring up fairly for a time, but in some season of temptation fall away, we have abundant reason to bless God for all who have departed this life in his "faith, fear, and love," and have finally escaped those storms which have caused so many to make shipwreck of their faith.

On earth, also, the memory of this young prince was to be blessed. He was to come to the grave in peace, and to be mourned over by a bereaved and affectionate people; many of whom probably had hoped, that, some years hence, he should be the happy instrument of restoring the pure worship of God. It is true that posthumous honours, paid to the frail remains of the body after the spirit has fled, are of little consequence in themselves, and of none to the breathless dust; but since God was pleased, under the Jewish economy, to make use of earthly as well as spiritual rewards and punishments, he would not suffer even these lesser marks of respect and affection to be omitted. Abijah had honoured him, and he made the memory of Abijah to be honoured by man; whereas the bodies of his idolatrous

relatives were cast into the streets: so that, according to the prophecy, "him that died of Jeroboam in the city, the dogs did eat; and him that died in the field the fowls of the air did eat; for the Lord had spoken it."

The example of this young man speaks powerfully to two classes of persons.

And, first, it addresses those who are commencing or continuing a Christian course of life under discouraging circumstances. Their disadvantages may be of various kinds—such as an evil education; the absence of early habits of religious observance; strong passions; powerful temptations; irreligious connexions; or peculiar difficulties in the way of procuring suitable spiritual instruction—but the example of Abijah proves that there can be no outward circumstances under which it is not possible for there to exist in the heart "some good thing towards the Lord God." We cannot, then, plead our disadvantages and temptations as an excuse for our wilful neglect of religion; nor ought we to be discouraged in our Christian course on account of them. Not unfrequently is it seen, that those who, like Abijah, have the fewest inducements of a worldly kind to assume a religious profession; those whose opportunities of instruction are the most scanty, and whose difficulties are the most formidable, ac-

quire, in the end, the greatest consistency of character; exhibit the humblest life; enjoy most of "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts;" are least moved by temptations, least unsettled about points of debate and idle speculation, least dependent upon themselves, and least shaken from their faith and adherence to their Saviour. While, therefore, those whose religious advantages are great have much to be thankful for, and much to answer for; those whose advantages are more scanty have no cause for despair. As is their trial, so shall be their strength; for he who wrought in the youthful Abijah some good thing towards his name, will never forsake any, however unfavourably circumstanced, who put their trust in him, and endeavour to walk in the ways of his commandments.

But still more powerfully does the example of this youthful servant of God appeal to those who, with every Christian privilege profusely heaped upon them, are still careless and unrepentant. How much will those have to give an account for, who have enjoyed the advantage of religious parents and instructors; who have heard the Scriptures read and explained from their childhood; who have attended the public worship of God; whose understanding is well-informed respecting points of Christian faith and duty; and whose conscience bears a

powerful witness concerning what is evil and what is good; but who, with so much that is good around them, shew nothing good within them, no anxiety for the salvation of their souls, no love for God, no wish to keep his commandments. How tormenting will be their remorse, when, at the last day, they behold the son of the wicked and idolatrous Jeroboam placed on the right hand of the throne of God, and themselves, notwithstanding their religious ancestry and Christian privileges, stationed on the left! How will the servants of God, in every former age, rise up in judgment against the present generation; for when were the means of religious instruction so abundant? when was religious education so easily to be obtained? when was the word of God so cheaply accessible? when were the outward difficulties in the way of a religious course so few? We are eminently among those servants who know their Lord's will, and who, if they neglect to do it, will be beaten with many stripes. We cannot plead ignorance; we cannot plead want of invitation; the voice of mercy sounds in our ears, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" the offer of pardon is free; the way to the Father is open; the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; the Holy Spirit is promised to all that ask him. How, then, shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

SERMON III.

DEFECTIONS IN RELIGION.

GAL. V. 7.

Ye did run well, who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

IT is a melancholy idea connected with every human good, that it is liable to change and decay. If we look at the works of God, they are fixed and durable: the same sun shines upon us which shone upon our forefathers: the same earth supports our steps that supported theirs; and, to a considerable extent, the rocks, and oceans, and rivers characterize the landscape of nature, which marked it in earlier times. Not so with man;—the place that knew him, soon knows him no more; change and uncertainty are inscribed on him, and on all his works; his noblest structures fade before the hand of time;—in a few years his boasted labours are forgotten, and cold oblivion closes the scene of all his achievements.

This perpetual change, this tendency to

desolation and decay, apply also to the human mind and character. Scarcely any person is the same long together. If we meet a friend after a few years' absence, we often discover his mind to be as much changed as his person. We left him, perhaps, kind and affectionate; we find him gradually become cold and selfish; we left him a hopeful and promising character; we find him deeply plunged in iniquity, and despising all that he once practised and approved: or if we refer to his religious as well as his moral character, too often may we be ready to exclaim with the Apostle, in the words of the text, "Thou didst run well, who hath hindered thee that thou shouldst not obey the truth?" It is inexpressibly afflicting to the mind of the Christian to behold one who once appeared enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and was partaker of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, thus falling away—turning from the simplicity of Christ, and giving heed to the seductions of Satan and the world.

Such appears to have been the painful experience of St. Paul, in the Epistle before us. He had probably founded, and certainly had been the instrument of building up, the Galatian church. The converts of that church had expressed for him the greatest affection and

attachment. They were willing, he himself remarks, to have plucked out their eyes, and to have given them to him. His ministry seemed powerful and prosperous among them, and had been the means of uniting them to him by the strongest ties of gratitude and affection. But let us mark the unhappy result which their want of Christian vigilance shortly produced. Scarcely had he left them when new teachers crept in, perverting their faith, and urging them to rely, at least in part, upon the Law of Moses for justification before God. No error could be more contrary to the Apostle's ministry; none more fatal to their own souls. St. Paul, therefore, employs this Epistle expressly to bring them back, by the grace of God, to the faith which they had deserted. With this object in view, he reproves, he instructs, he corrects, he invites them by various arguments and persuasions. He affectionately demands who it was, to use his own strong language, that had bewitched them that they should not obey the truth. He reminds them of their former joy and peace in believing, and of their once exemplary and consistent conduct. In short, he leaves no topic unnoticed that might convince their understanding or win their hearts.

Now, considering that the case of these Galatians is not a solitary instance, but one of

extensive application, and in some measure affecting us all, it may be useful from the words of the text to consider,

First, How we may judge when a person sets out well in his religious course; and,

Secondly, How we may discover when he has been hindered in it.

First, How may we judge when a person sets out well in his religious course?—It is not every one who arrives safely at last, that can be said to have set out really well: for, to take the Apostle's own allusion to a race, the candidate does not always begin happily; he may have stumbled at first, and have afterwards been enabled to recover his ground; some of his obstacles may have been removed, so that he who appeared for a time the hindmost may have at length won one of the brightest prizes. It does not, therefore, appear necessary that the Christian pilgrim should for ever despair, because the earlier part of his journey was not so consistent or vigorous as he could desire it to have been: he should, doubtless, look rather to *present* than to past circumstances, for the evidence of his state before God. He should rather ask the practical question, Whereas I was blind, do I now see? than confine himself to such inquiries, as, when and how he began to see at all. If his heart be really right before

God, if he be walking holily and consistently in true faith and obedience, if his Saviour be precious to him, if the evidences of conversion be conspicuous in his character, he has plain and convincing proof that he is *now* at least running well, whenever or however his race may have first commenced. This conviction, therefore, ought to cheer his mind and sustain his progress; that while he sorrows over his early deficiencies, he may not sorrow as those without hope; that while he learns the painful lessons of humility and self-distrust, he may not doubt of that mercy of God which has made a way for his escape, and enabled him at length to attain a more sincere and consistent character.

But, although these considerations should encourage the humble penitent who perhaps despairs of mercy because he has not hitherto run in the ways of God so consistently as he feels it was his duty and his privilege to do; it must not be denied, that a hopeful and satisfactory commencement of a religious course is always desirable, and usually furnishes the best omen of future progress. It is true, that the racer who appeared wavering, careless, or ignorant at the outset of his course, *may* at length win the prize, and therefore ought to persist in his undertaking with new alacrity, rather than despair, because of his early failings; but this is not *ordinarily* the case, either

in temporal or spiritual affairs. He who begins ill will usually end ill. It is important, therefore, that even the very first steps in religion, as well as the remainder of the race, should be correctly and earnestly pursued.

The question, then, which forms the first head of our inquiry is, How we may judge when a person sets out really well in his religious course. To this I would reply, that he may be said to have begun well when *repentance*, *faith*, *love*, and *humility*, are in due exercise. Let us briefly touch upon each of these points.

1. In the first place, a person cannot be said to begin to run well where *repentance* is not deep and conspicuous. The structure which is to rise high, and be truly solid, must have a firm foundation. To speak of joy and peace where there has not been true godly sorrow, is but self-deception. Our Lord has described some who received the word with joy; it sprang up quickly; but it was not founded in deep penitence, and it quickly withered away. To have contemplated ourselves in all our guilt and wretchedness; to have felt the folly, the impiety, the ingratitude of sin; to have viewed, in all its terrors, that blackness of darkness which awaits the impenitent transgressor, and to have trembled under the awful apprehension of this becoming our own deserved lot, is a far

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more hopeful commencement of a religious life than the contrary frame of mind in which deep repentance seems to have little or no place. In proportion, therefore, as penitence is deep and lasting, we may augur well of the future steadiness and consistency of a person's character. Having seen and felt the terrors of the Lord, such a man will be doubly fearful of going back into his sins: having tasted "the wormwood and the gall," his soul will have them in such vivid remembrance, as to keep him in a constant spirit of prayer and vigilance, that he may not again be entangled with "the yoke of bondage."

2. The presence of *faith* also was mentioned as another evidence of our beginning to run well;—not perhaps that strong degree of faith which is attended with great joy and exultation; for many a Christian is running well, who by no means experiences those higher comforts in religion which are often the attendants of the full assurance of faith and hope. But the degree of faith which is sufficient to indicate a hopeful progress, and without which no consistent progress can be expected, is that portion of it which *begins* at least to purify the heart, to work by love, and to overcome the world. This portion, however small, will soon be visible in its effects: and indeed there is perhaps no symptom more indicative of a fa-

vourable commencement of a Christian course, than such a principle as makes earthly objects sink into their due insignificance, and heavenly ones become all-important; such a principle as changes the whole character of its possessor; a principle, in short, which is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

3. But repentance and faith are not all: for we cannot be said to have begun our course really well, if our *affections* are not duly raised to heavenly things. The true Christian, even at his first commencement of the Divine life, must feel deeply interested in the great subjects connected with his salvation. His love must be ardent towards God and universal towards man. A cold, unfeeling frame of mind is a very inauspicious beginning of that new life which is to lead its possessor to give up every thing for his Redeemer; to love the Lord his God, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and to become all things to all men for their good to edifying. Indeed, if at any time we may reasonably look for zealous affections, and disinterested and eager exertion, it is surely in those stages of religion when all is new and delightful, and when the heart first begins to expand with the early and cheering rays of the Divine favour. In this respect, as well as in others, the Galatians ran

salvation; if he make excuses for it, or consider the high privilege of a believer in Christ Jesus as exempting its possessor from that constant self-distrust and holy caution which ought never to forsake us till the hour in which mortality shall be swallowed up of life. It is an important mark of running well, when deep penitence and godly sorrow on account of sin grow in full proportion with every other Christian grace, and are not at all weakened by those brighter views of pardon and forgiveness which are perfectly consistent with the deepest contrition and self-abasement.

2. We do not run well if *faith* has become weakened, so that we have begun in any measure to lose those vivid impressions of eternal things which once appeared to occupy the mind.—It being the property of faith to reduce the objects of this world to their diminutive size, and to bring those of futurity into full display, faith must necessarily have been diminished, and with it every thing holy and favourable in the character, the moment the world has regained its ascendancy, and the concerns of eternity have lost their power over the heart.

3. Again, we do not run well if our spiritual *affections* have become cold; if we seem no longer to take delight in religious duties, but find ourselves rather impelled by fear than by love in the discharge of them.—This wavering state

of the character will be evidenced by our no longer joining with cordiality in the society of religious persons; by our shunning the reproach of the Cross of Christ; and by a fear lest we should be esteemed righteous overmuch. Where the spiritual affections are in vigorous exercise, such effects could not possibly have taken place; for it is the property of the affections, when actively excited, to urge us to active, willing zeal, and not to allow of our continually questioning whether we are bound to act up to the obligations of a plain bounden duty.

4. But of all symptoms of ceasing to run well, the loss of Christian *humility* is one of the most common and dangerous.—When a person becomes spiritually proud and disputatious, thinks that he knows more than all other men in the affairs of religion, neglects the plainer and weightier matters of God's law for difficult speculations, which minister rather to his pride than his edification, there can be little doubt, that, how clear soever may be his creed, and how ardent soever his zeal, he is in reality going back instead of advancing in the ways of God. It matters little in this respect what particular turn spiritual pride may take: for whether it draw us, on the one hand, to a cold, speculative, formal system of pharisaism, and dependence upon our own unenlightened reason; or, on the other, to a

scheme rash, lawless, and presumptuous, in which every thing practical is undervalued or neglected, the evidence is equally strong of our having gone back; and the fear is, that unless we become aware of our danger in time, we shall continue to go back even to perdition.

The chief practical conclusion, therefore, to be derived from the text, is the duty of habitual self-examination, with earnest prayer to God who alone can keep us in the paths of faith, holiness, and true obedience. The tendency towards error, unbelief, coldness of heart, and inconsistency of life, is ever present to us; and no sooner are our faces once turned towards sin and the world, than every thing conspires to urge us on in this downward progress. What daily self-scrutiny, therefore, does it require, what earnest prayer, what unceasing watchfulness; above all, how much of the influences of the Holy Spirit, to preserve us in the right path! We may cease to run well long before we become duly sensible of our own unhappy case. The first deficiencies usually evidence themselves in things which others cannot see: our private devotions become lax and languid; the world and worldliness begin to occupy a larger share of our affections; our conscience becomes less tender, and our hearts less susceptible of religious impressions than was once the case. At the first appearance of such

symptoms—and, if we are duly watchful, we shall readily perceive them as soon as they arise—it becomes us, as we value our souls, to retrace our steps; to come again to the blood of sprinkling, in order that we may be cleansed from an evil heart of unbelief; to pray for the renewed grace of the Holy Spirit; and to avail ourselves of all those means of religious edification which God has mercifully provided to meet our wants. In so doing, we may not only recover the ground we had lost, but, by the blessing of our heavenly Father, become more than ever consistent and exemplary followers of the Redeemer. Thus not only will our own souls be abundantly benefited, but others may be brought to God by our example, and, seeing our good works, learn to glorify our Father which is in heaven. *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

CHRIST'S POVERTY THE CHRISTIAN'S RICHES.

2 COR. viii. 9.

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

THE Apostle appeals to the Corinthians as to persons well acquainted with the fundamental articles of Christianity;—*Ye know:* but recollecting the ignorance and carelessness of the human mind, he takes an opportunity, at the same time, of reminding them of what they could not but have already heard. We also, like them, have had ample opportunities of learning the great doctrines that are necessary to salvation: we have even been baptized into the Christian faith; we have professed to fight manfully under the banners of Christ, and to continue his faithful servants and soldiers unto our lives' end; but, alas! how often do we seem wholly unconscious of these things, and treat them as though they were of no importance

whatever! How often do we crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame! How often do we do despite to the Spirit of his grace, and trample his richest mercies beneath our feet; and that not for want of knowing better, for we cannot but be aware of his numerous claims on our love and gratitude, but for want of being really impressed with the truths which we acknowledge and understand! With a view to correct this too-common forgetfulness, let us humbly pray to God for his presence and blessing, while we consider the impressive words before us; from which we learn,

First, That Christ was originally rich;

Secondly, That he became poor; and

Thirdly, The end for which he did so; namely, in order that we, by his poverty, might become rich.

First, He was originally rich.—He existed eternally in heaven with the Father, as God, endued with every excellence and perfection. He was that Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God. Before Abraham was, he was. In this state he was rich in glory, as we learn from his own prayer when on earth, in which he says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He was rich in dignity: "Being in the form

of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God." He was rich in power, dominion, and majesty. He was, as St. Paul informs us, "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature;" for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. By *Him* were the worlds made; in *Him* dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was the brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express image of his Person.

Being thus Lord over all, he might have commanded all the wealth of this lower world, could that have augmented the riches of the Divine nature; for those things which men account good and valuable, not only belonged to him, but were even created by him.

Secondly, Let us turn aside to consider and inquire into a fact the most astonishing. He in whom the richest glories of heaven and earth centered, whom the highest angel rejoiced to obey, and who, by a single word, could have spoken into existence a thousand worlds such as we inhabit—became poor. Poor indeed! "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air

have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head." He was placed, at his birth, in a manger, because his parents could not obtain admission into the inn. His youth was without honour, and, very probably, employed in manual labour. Who could have believed that *He* was God over all, blessed for ever, of whom the Jews said, in contempt, "Is not this the carpenter's Son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not with us?" So poor was our Lord, even in the literal sense of the expression, that he subsisted on the alms of devout women who followed him, and was constrained to work a miracle to pay the customary tribute.

But his poverty consisted not merely in the absence of what men call riches, but in being stripped of all those things which before constituted his splendour and glory. He no longer occupied the throne of heaven, or was attended by the innumerable companies of the heavenly host. Even in his last sufferings, when he so much needed assistance, he summoned but one angel to afford him relief.

He was also stripped of power, so that men, his weak and guilty creatures, were permitted to seize him and put him to death. Though the most exalted station on earth would have been an infinite degradation, yet, as if to shew more

evidently his humility, he submitted to a very low one. He suffered himself to be made not only a little lower than the angels, but one even of the lowest among men. His whole life was a scene of ignominy. He was persecuted from city to city, having no abiding place. He considered himself "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people." The assembly of the wicked enclosed him; they pierced his hands and his feet; they parted his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture. Entering the world poor, without a home to dwell in, and obliged to lie in a manger, he continued poor, and associated through life with fishermen, and publicans, and sinners, till at length he quitted the world poorer, if possible, than ever, deprived of his very garments, for which the Roman soldiers cast lots.

He was poor, also, in spirit: he had no high looks. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting. Thus poor in body, and poorer in spirit, did the eternal Son of God consent to live for more than thirty years among men.

This poverty was voluntary. "Ye know," says the Apostle, in the words of the text, "the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, the voluntary, the unmerited favour. Had it been

an unwilling sacrifice, it would have been no longer of grace. He himself has told us, that his sufferings were of his own free will: he had power to lay down his life, and to take it up, and no man could deprive him of it without his consent.

Thirdly, What could be the motive that induced him to so wonderful a condescension? The Apostle gives the reply: It was "for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."

The Prophets agree with the Apostles that the sufferings of Christ were not for himself, but for us. Thus Daniel predicted that Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself. But Isaiah is the most full and explicit. "Surely," said he, speaking of the Messiah that should be revealed, "he hath borne OUR griefs, and carried OUR sorrows." And again: "We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was he smitten. He bare the sins of many, and made atonement for the transgressors." Thus it was that we who were poor by nature, became rich by the Divine grace.

The true Christian is made rich in various respects.—He is rich in faith. God is said, by St. James, to have chosen "the poor of this

world rich in faith." If we be thus enriched, what is outward poverty? Worldly distinctions will appear of very little comparative importance in our eyes. Faith will unveil the eternal treasures that are laid up for us, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; and seeing those things which are invisible, we shall learn to enjoy them in somewhat the same way, though not in the same degree, as if they were present. Let us pray, therefore, daily to the Author of every good and perfect gift to strengthen and confirm our faith.

The Christian is also made rich in righteousness. He is accepted through the righteousness of God. His own righteousness, or meritorious claim, being discarded, he is clothed in the robe of the righteousness of his Redeemer. Rich, indeed, may he be accounted, who is thus arrayed! When all earthly treasures fail, this will be a never-fading possession.

The Christian is also made rich in spiritual enjoyments. He has the highest sources of happiness within his own heart. The thought of the glory that awaits him is a possession which he would not exchange for the highest temporal hopes. He has a joy and peace in believing, which he would not resign for all the treasures of an unsatisfying world. They will last when every thing else fails; and without

them all that we can possess on earth is but poverty.

Another, and a principal thing in which the Christian is made rich, is holiness and good works. Walking in the Spirit, he does not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, are cultivated by him. He endeavours to walk worthy of God, who hath called him unto his kingdom. That very same grace by which Christ was led to become poor that we might be rich, teaches him, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." "Out of a good conversation, therefore, he shews his works with meekness of wisdom." He abounds richly in the graces and virtues of the Christian character; though knowing his own sinfulness and his inability to atone for his transgressions, or to satisfy the broken law of God, he dares not make them his boast, or place his trust in them for salvation.

Lastly, he is made rich in eternal glory and felicity. But here the highest conception must fail. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," those unfading riches which God hath laid up for them that love him. When time shall end, and all earthly things are for-

gotten, these riches shall still be new and inexhaustible. They shall not, like temporal riches, make to themselves wings, and flee away, but shall be firm and eternal as the Divine Source from which they are derived. All that God can give, and all that the human soul can desire, is included in the riches which Christ, by his voluntary poverty, and submission to death, has procured for his faithful followers. Hence every enjoyment of heaven will exalt our love towards him by whom it was purchased; and will make us sing with new ardours of gratitude, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

SERMON V.

VAIN PRAYERS.

JER. XXXVII. 1—3.

And king Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made king in the land of Judah. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal, the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.

IN reading the Scriptures for the purposes of spiritual edification, persons are not always sufficiently sensible of the value of the historical parts. Yet these were given of God as much as the more devotional, preceptive, or doctrinal portions, and were intended for the benefit of the church to the end of time. They are not to be looked upon as merely the national records of the houses of Israel and Judah; for

they point throughout to the preparations for the coming of Him who was to die for the whole human race, and they illustrate the conduct of the Almighty towards the children of men in every age of the world. They exhibit also a most affecting view of the human heart in all its windings; and in this way are eminently instructive even to those who may not have leisure or ability to trace the whole narrative, or to understand all its parts. Thus, in the passage just read as the text, it is not absolutely necessary, before a poor and illiterate person can draw any benefit from it, that he should be minutely acquainted with all the circumstances of the history to which it relates. So far, indeed, as he has opportunity, such points are not to be neglected; but, even detached from the context, there is presented to us, on the very face of the passage, a picture which must strike every attentive reader, and ought to lead him to serious reflection upon his own religious inconsistencies;—the picture of a king, his courtiers, and his people, obstinately refusing to hearken to the voice of the Lord by his prophet, and yet, by a strange contradiction, entreating that prophet's prayers; despising the admonitions of religion, yet desirous of its benefits; careless of God in the hour of supposed security, yet hoping for his favour in the time of trouble; seeking the intercessions of

others, but not praying for themselves; and making religion merely a sort of superstitious charm to preserve them from danger, without its having any effect upon their hearts or actions. Such was the conduct of the persons mentioned in the text; and would that there were no similar inconsistencies in the practice of too many professed Christians in the present day! Would that our lives never contradicted our petitions! Would that we were always as attentive to use the means, as anxious to secure the end! Would that outward ceremonies were never substituted for true piety and obedience of heart! "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

In reference to the conduct of the persons spoken of in the text, there are several points which deserve to be particularly noticed.

I. And, first, we may remark *the forced acknowledgment which, in their affliction, they paid to religion, though in their time of supposed security they had despised it.*—Jeremiah had been bitterly persecuted for his faithful admonitions. Instead of penitently listening to him when he uttered "God's judgments against them touching their wickedness," they denounced him as an enemy

to his country, and afterwards threw him into a dungeon. How affectionately did he plead with them, by their past knowledge of the mercies of Jehovah! How faithfully did he display to them the terrors of his denunciations! How affectionately did he remonstrate with them for having "forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to themselves broken cisterns that could hold no water!" How earnestly did he entreat them "to amend their ways and their doings;" "to put away their abominations;" and to return to the Lord their God! How pathetically did he exhibit to them the long-suffering of their offended Creator; his gracious promises to returning penitents; his willingness to receive them, notwithstanding their past transgressions; and his pledge to put his fear into their hearts, that they should not depart from him again. "Is Ephraim a dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "They shall be my people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good."

But what effect had these remonstrances? Alas! instead of repenting, the king, the courtiers, and the people were deeply offended: they even resolved upon revenge; and they conspired to take away the life of the prophet. In the mean time, in order to heal the wound which his faithful admonitions had caused in their consciences, they had recourse to false prophets, who flattered them in their sins, and urged them on to their destruction. But now that the predicted vengeance against their iniquities was approaching; now that their city was besieged by the king of Babylon, and was about to be captured according to the word of the Lord by Jeremiah, whither do these hardened despisers of God's warnings and judgments betake themselves? To their false prophets? No: these could no longer afford them any consolation. The flattering words, the "untempered mortar" which had held together the proud edifice of their hopes for a time, while the day was fair and no storm appeared nigh, could be of no service to them now that the blast was fierce, and the tempest overwhelming. In their trouble, they applied to the despised and persecuted servant of God; thus tacitly acknowledging that, however the heart may be hardened, or the conscience lulled to repose, for a time, there is usually a secret misgiving in the breast of every sinner. He

feels that he is in a dangerous course: he is convinced that death and eternity, and heaven and hell, deserve that serious thought which he is not disposed to give to them: he desires to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his, though he prefers the pleasures of sin for the short season of this fleeting life. He may for a time despise religion himself, or ridicule it in others: he may wish to think that it is only a specious delusion, and that its faithful followers are enthusiasts or hypocrites; but in the hour of trouble, on the bed of sickness, and in the terrors of death, he would gladly flee to it for consolation. Were worlds his, eagerly would he exchange them for one gleam of hope beyond the grave. While mercy was freely offered, he despised it: now he earnestly desires to obtain it, but dares not hope that it will be afforded. Ofttimes "Wisdom called, and he refused; she stretched forth her hand, and he disregarded;" now "she laughs at his calamity, and mocks when his fear cometh." "They shall call upon me," says the Almighty, "and I will not answer: they shall seek me, and shall not find me; because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." We cannot indeed say of any particular individual, that he is thus given over; on the contrary, there is ample encouragement to the sinner who never turned to God

before, to turn to him in the hour of his affliction, when every other resource fails him, and when he begins at length to feel his need of that friend who is a very present help in time of trouble. But still God is not to be despised with impunity: each new sin adds to that fearful summing up of Divine displeasure, "Let him alone;" "I swear in my wrath he shall never enter into my rest."

II. A second observable point in the conduct of the persons mentioned in the text is *their superstitious dependence upon the intercessions of another, while they prayed not for themselves.*— There is much that resembles this in every age. The people of Israel were perpetually asking for the prayers of their prophets in their calamities, without any reflection upon the real nature or intention of prayer. So in the Church of Rome religion is often viewed as consisting in the transaction of certain ceremonies with Heaven, on the part of the priest, in which the people have little or no share. A similar spirit is too frequently displayed by professed Protestants. Many trust vaguely to the benefits of their baptism: in which prayers were offered for them, accompanied by charitable pledges on their behalf, neither of which have they ever seriously ratified in their own persons since they came to years of discretion. Again: they

expect to derive benefit from the rite of Confirmation, without any corresponding disposition to renew their baptismal covenant. So again, they receive the Lord's supper from the hands of their minister, and the word of God from his lips, with a carelessness of spirit, as though nothing more were required from them than to remain indifferent and passive, while their calling and election are made sure for them by the pious zeal of others. They desire the prayers of the church when they are in sickness or danger; yet, even then, they can scarcely be induced to listen to the declarations of the Gospel respecting their spiritual malady, or to utter a heartfelt prayer for mercy on their own account. These are dangerous delusions: we cannot become Christians by proxy: it is not what is done for us by the charitable care of others, but what passes in our own souls, that marks our translation from darkness to light, and from death to life. The ministers of Christ may visit the sick man in his extremity, and utter over him the most earnest and befitting forms of supplication; but what profits this unless faith and conscious necessity render the petitions his own? Prayer was not designed to inform God of what by his infinite wisdom he knows already; but it was intended to strengthen those holy affections which should accompany prayer, or to which prayer should

give birth; to shew our reverential homage for the Object of our devotions; our humility in his presence; our deep sense of our wants, and of his entire willingness to supply them; our remorse for our sins; our trust in the sacrifice and merits of our Redeemer; our desire for his pardoning grace, and the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit. Unless, therefore, our prayers are uttered in somewhat of this frame of mind, they are but vain forms. We may kneel down, it is true, with our fellow-worshippers; we may hear them pray for themselves and for us, and our lips may join in their petitions; but if our *hearts* do not pray, the service of the lips is but a mockery. It was not more absurd to suppose that the prayers of the prophet Jeremiah would avail for his countrymen, if they prayed not for themselves, than that the words of prayer uttered by our own lips will benefit us if offered up with a prayerless spirit. Nay, it was, if possible, a less absurdity; for the intercessions of a righteous man are of inestimable value to the world: and who can say how often the Father of mercies may, for the sake of his blessed Son, have heard and answered the petitions of his servants for others, where the individuals prayed for scarcely thought of or valued the blessing? But when did a prayer, uttered as an unmeaning form, produce any benefit to the utterer?

Or when did the Almighty condescend to listen to petitions issuing from feigned lips?

III. But a third circumstance which may be noticed in the history before us is, *the strange inconsistency which it exhibits in the separation of prayer from obedience.* "They hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord;" yet they said, "Pray to the Lord for us."—There was nothing wrong in asking Jeremiah to pray for them: this was in itself a wise and pious request: their inconsistency lay in separating prayer from repentance, and faith, and turning to God, and obedience to his commands: thus making it almost a superstitious ceremony without any moral or spiritual benefit. The very spirit of prayer is an endeavour to conform to the known will of God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." It was disobedience to God that had brought Zedekiah and his people into their affliction: yet, they hoped that he would hear the petitions offered for their deliverance, while they persisted in that disobedience. But was this likely? Did it consist with his divine honour or equity, or with the rules which he has laid down for the government of the world? Yet, thousands of those who call themselves Christians act in a similar manner. They profess to pray for the pardon of sin; but they do not truly repent of

it, or endeavour to forsake it. They profess to thank God for his inestimable gift in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, whom they call their Saviour and Master; yet they repose not in his sacrifice; they feel no real love or gratitude to him; and they strive not to copy his example. Like the self-deceivers in the text, they entreat that God would deliver them when in affliction or danger; but they pray not, at least with sincerity and fervour, that he would renew their hearts and turn them from those evil ways which were the cause of his controversy with them. They forget that those only have the promise of being heard and answered who approach their Creator, not only through the right channel—namely, Jesus Christ, the sole Mediator between God and man—but also with right dispositions of heart; with simplicity of purpose; with reverence for his commands; with penitence and faith; and with an earnest wish to live to his glory. A wicked life defeats all the effect of prayer. A man's confidential intercourse is with his friends: and those only are the friends of God who worship him in the Gospel of his Son, and earnestly labour, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to keep his commandments.

IV. The last point which we shall notice relative to the conduct of the persons spoken of

in the text is, *that they did not add their exertions to their prayers.*—And what will prayer, efficacious as, when rightly employed, it is, effect without exertion? God has connected the end with the use of the means; and if we neglect the one, it is presumptuous to hope for the other. Will prayer for humility suffice to make a man humble? Will praying to be enabled to understand the Scriptures give that understanding, without studying them and meditating upon their sacred contents? Will praying that our faith may be strengthened, strengthen it, while we neglect to make use of the instruments of spiritual stability? Will praying for holiness make us holy while we deliberately walk in the paths of unholiness? Will praying for the pardon of our sins bring down that pardon while we use no efforts to live as becomes those who are pardoned, or who desire to be pardoned? Can a parent hope that his prayers for his children will be of any benefit, if he is not adding his exertions to his wishes; if he is not bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, guarding them from the snares of youthful life, and setting before them a Christian example? Is it to any purpose that we entreat to be kept from temptation when we are voluntarily running into it; or that we pray against worldly mindedness, when we choose worldly minded companions; or that we

seek for the guidance and consolation of the Holy Spirit in words, when in our conduct we are grieving Him by wilful impenitence and inconsistency? Care, and vigilance, and self-controul, and self-denial, and self-examination, are as necessary as prayer: neither without the others is sufficient. We readily allow this in our temporal concerns. When we pray for our daily bread, we do not expect to procure it without corresponding exertion. "Prayer," remarks a pious author, "will not plough one's field, nor fence it, nor reap the grain, nor thresh it; but prayer may procure strength to labour, and a blessing to accompany and succeed our prudent industry." And it is thus in religion; God does every thing that is good for us; but he expects us to make use of the appointed instruments of spiritual blessing as much as though we did every thing for ourselves. He graciously preserves us from many an unseen peril; but if, instead of using the means of prevention, we wilfully put our foot into the snare, we cannot hope that he will interpose to prevent our being entangled. We are "to watch" as well as to "pray" that we enter not into temptation: we are to keep at a distance from it: we are to employ every effort to resist it; and if we neglect to do this, are we to wonder if we fall? Moses, and the people of Israel, did well to cry unto God in their extremity; but they did ill in neglecting the means of

escape which he had set before them; and their supineness was accordingly rebuked by the Almighty: "Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the people that they go forward."

We perceive, from the foregoing remarks, that true prayer is not merely the occasional formal act of uttering a few unmeaning petitions with our lips, while our affections and understandings are otherwise engaged. True prayer generally supposes a habit of prayer; and in order for there to be such a habit, our lives must be conformable to our prayers. A mere verbal address to the Almighty is of itself of no avail; we pray most efficaciously when we are cherishing the dispositions and performing the duties which are the subject matter of our entreaties. Thus, in the prayer which our Lord himself taught us, we truly acknowledge God for "our Father" when we repose in him as such, and feel a filial reverence towards him: we cannot pray aright that his name may be hallowed, and his kingdom come, unless we are endeavouring to hallow that name, and to advance that kingdom: our asking that his will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven is not true prayer, unless we are endeavouring to do that will: we cannot expect our daily bread, if we are not "learning and labouring to get our own living," and "to provide things honest in the sight of all men:" our prayer that God

would foregive us our trespasses, is not only an unmeaning form but will turn against ourselves, if we do not "forgive them that trespass against us;" and our petitions to be kept from temptation, and delivered from evil, are little better than a mockery, if we are wilfully running into the one, and using not the appointed means of rescue from the other. Let us then carefully examine *how* we pray; our state of mind at the time, and our dispositions and endeavours afterwards. In so doing, we shall have humiliating cause to perceive why our prayers are usually followed by so little practical benefit. Our petitions are not offered in faith, or accompanied by a spirit of love, or followed up by a corresponding attention to practical duty. Hence they fall inefficacious to the ground. And can we be surprised at this? If, on our part, we do not "hearken to the word of the Lord," to walk in his ways, can we wonder that on his part he rejects our petitions? It is not without reason that the Church, in the midst of our professed devotions, so often recals our wandering thoughts with the exhortation "Let us pray;" to which, after our petitions are concluded, we should add, "May we ever live as we pray;" for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight." "God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

SERMON VI.

THE CRIME OF JUDAS.

LUKE XXII. 48.

But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

OF the miserable and wicked man whom our Lord addressed in these words, nothing is known except what is recorded in the Gospel narrative. Respecting his education, his early history, and habits of life, before his call to the holy office of the Apostleship, from which he so awfully revolted, we are not informed. He is first mentioned on occasion of our Lord's choosing twelve individuals from among the multitudes which attended his ministry; the three Evangelists who give us an account of that transaction, all concluding their catalogue with the name of "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." Some time after this we find him endued, in common with the eleven, with the power of working miracles, and commissioned to go and preach the Gospel to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The next

time we hear of him, is on that memorable occasion when, many professed disciples having forsaken our Lord, he put the question to his Apostles, "Will ye also go away?" and received from the lips of St. Peter the reply of every heart but that of Judas, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." In answer to which, Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" that is, as the term literally signifies, "an accuser;" alluding, says the Evangelist, to Judas, who should betray him. We next hear of him when the box of precious ointment was poured upon our Saviour's head, shortly before his agony. He affected to be indignant that the ointment had not been sold, and the money given to the poor; "not," adds the sacred historian, "that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

These brief events in this wicked man's life prepare us for the dreadful deed which blackened his closing days, and has consigned his memory to eternal infamy. We shall not dwell upon the particulars of this awful narrative. Behold him contracting with the priests and leaders of the people to betray the Innocent Blood; yet afterwards sitting at the table of

his Master listening to the prophetic declaration of his own treachery; witnessing the overwhelming grief of his fellow-disciples at the dreadful thought; hearing their impassioned exclamation, "Lord, is it I?" even daring, with a hypocritical hardihood, himself to utter the same condemning question, and receiving from the Searcher of all hearts, the fearful reply, "Thou hast said; what thou doest, do quickly." See him, in the hour of his Master's agony in the garden, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, advancing with an armed band to seize the guileless victim of his perfidy; pointing him out by the kiss of pretended friendship; then with bitterest remorse returning to his employers, casting down at their feet the base reward of his treachery, and plunging himself in despair into eternity, with all his aggravated transgressions on his head!

Many and awful are the reflections to which the particulars of this narrative may well give rise; but we pass them by to allude more particularly to that part of the transaction mentioned in the text; and this not for the purpose of venting our grief and indignation upon the traitor Judas, but of applying the subject to our own hearts; asking ourselves whether we too have not betrayed the Lord of life and glory, by a spirit and conduct unbecoming those who profess themselves his disciples; and whether we

also have not too often, like Judas, "wounded him in the house of his friends;" yea "crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame."

There are four circumstances connected with the crime of Judas, which greatly aggravate his guilt: First, The character of Him whom he betrayed, called in our text, "The Son of Man;" Secondly, The despicableness of the inducement for so doing; Thirdly, His neglect of the warnings he had received, and which ought to have put him on his guard against temptation; and, Fourthly, The base treachery under which he perpetrated his crime, and which is so affectingly referred to in our Lord's expostulation in the text, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man *with a kiss?*" These several circumstances we shall briefly refer to, adding to the consideration of each a few applicatory remarks by way of warning to ourselves.

I. The first aggravation of the crime of Judas, was the character of the sacred Personage whom he betrayed.—When our Lord, in the passage under consideration, spake of himself so emphatically as "the Son of Man," Judas could not but have recollected that remarkable conversation, in which his Divine Master had twice used this very expression, with a prophetic reference to the crime of his betrayer. "The Son of Man," said he, "goeth,

as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." This was the title by which our Lord habitually spoke of himself; and Judas well knew its import. "Betrayest thou Him who has ever been to thee so kind a master, so faithful a friend? Him whose whole course of life thou knowest to have been pure and blameless, full of mercy and good works? Him whom thou hast seen going about doing good; comforting the afflicted, and healing the sick; restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead? Him, above all, who is the promised Messiah; the Lord of life and glory; the eternal Son of God, the omnipotent Saviour of the world?" Had not Judas been fearfully hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, how deep must have been the emotions of penitence and remorse which this tender expostulation must have awakened! For his offence was committed against the greatest and best of Beings; against Him "in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" but who had assumed our frail and degraded nature, though without sin, from a disinterested love to mankind, that in that nature he might expiate our transgressions by the sacrifice of himself, and redeem us to God by his own most precious blood.

Let us learn, each of us, to view our transgressions in their true light, as offences against

God himself. Besides any injury that may arise to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures, from our conduct, every evil thought, and word, and work, is a violation of the law of our Creator, whose we are, and whom it is our duty and privilege to serve. "How shall I do this great wickedness," said Joseph, "and sin against God?" In like manner, said David, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned;" not that he had not deeply injured his neighbour, but he felt that, in addition to this, his crime had the greatest of all aggravations, that of being an offence against the Majesty of heaven itself. He whose laws we break, and whose threatenings we despise, is not a man like ourselves, who may be deceived by artifice, or overcome by force, or appeased by bribes; but the Most High, who is infinitely wise, and must know all our offences; infinitely just to punish them; and from whose omnipotence there is no escape. He is also our father, our benefactor, our friend; he gave his Son to die for us; he freely offers to pardon our sins through faith in this all-sufficient sacrifice; and all he asks in return is, that we should yield our hearts to him, and live to his glory. Such is the character of that gracious Being whose service we are so ready to neglect, whose cause we are so prone to betray!

II. But, secondly, the sin of Judas had the aggravation of being committed for a most despicable inducement.—It was not in a moment of terror, in order to escape the pains of martyrdom, or from some violent impulse of passion or temptation. No: it was a mere calculation of covetousness, which, for the sordid bribe of thirty pieces of silver, led him to commit the most atrocious crime which stains the annals of human history. He might doubtless indeed be incited in part by a hatred of that immaculate sanctity which was a constant reproof to his own corrupt dispositions and practices; he might dread the detection of his hypocrisy and theft; he might be stung by disappointment at finding that the kingdom which the Saviour had to offer was not, as he had probably expected, a splendid earthly dominion; and he might feel resentment on account of the prophetic declarations which our Lord had uttered of his intended perfidy: but whatever other motives might concur in stimulating his mind to this deed of wickedness, the love of money was the root of the evil. "What will ye give me," said he, "and I will deliver him unto you?" and "they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

And here again let us apply the subject to ourselves, with the heart-searching question,

"Lord, is it I?" Base and despicable as was the inducement of Judas to betray his Divine Master, what are the inducements of thousands who virtually tread in his steps? Would it be credited, were it not a matter of every-day experience, that men will break the most solemn commands of God, not once or twice, but all their lives through, at the impulse of the most trifling temptations? that they will risk their immortal souls for the gratification of a momentary appetite or passion? that a despicable bribe of money, or pleasure, or vanity, outweighs in their estimation all the laws, the promises, and the threatenings of their adorable Creator? that for a fraction perhaps of Judas's gains, so many who call themselves Christians, will break the Sabbath of the Lord their God, by devoting it to their worldly concerns? that others will take his name in vain for a mere idle exclamation, or profane it to call down vengeance on their fellow-creatures? that for the bait of worldly estimation, or to escape the sneers of the wicked, so many will sacrifice their conscience, and make God their enemy? In short, so weak and corrupt is the heart of man since the Fall, that there is no sin into which, but for the restraining grace of God, we may not fall, even to that of denying, as did Peter, the Master whom we profess to worship;

or, like Judas, betraying him, by immorality, profaneness, or unbelief.

III. A third aggravation of the crime of Judas, was his neglect of the warnings which he had received, and which ought to have put him on his guard against temptation.—The traitor did not rush suddenly, and without opportunity for reflection, into his dreadful career. His Master had spoken plainly to him on the subject; yet he did not avail himself of this miraculous discovery of what was passing in his heart, to own his guilt, and to pray that he might be kept from perpetrating his intended crime. So far from this, he deliberately brooded over it, till the evil dispositions which he had cherished in his heart "brought forth sin, and sin, when it was finished, brought forth death." His own conscience witnessed against him; for, as he confessed in his remorse within a few hours after, it was innocent blood which he had betrayed. Though tempted by the hopes of reward, he could not make any one discovery unfavourable to the character of his Master; and his awful end shews what opinion he had throughout entertained on the subject: for no new warning or disclosure had taken place to urge him to that desperate course; all that he knew, when he cast down the reward of his

treachery and went out and hanged himself, he had known from the first, so that he was utterly without excuse. His crime was committed not ignorantly or hastily; but against knowledge and warning, and with every circumstance to increase its heinousness.

And, though by the mercy of God, we may have been preserved from gross vice and profligacy, have we not, alas! reason to confess, with deep humiliation, that our sins, whether of thought, or word, or deed, have partaken of this aggravation, that they have been committed against the checks of conscience, the admonitions of God's word, and the secret strivings of his Holy Spirit in our hearts? We have not, indeed, had any particular offence foretold by an express voice from Heaven; but has not the Bible "told us all that ever we did?" Are not its warnings adapted to our case, as clearly as though they had been written for us alone? and are not its declarations respecting the sins and temptations which assail our fallen humanity, a transcript of what is passing in our own hearts, and in the world around us? We cannot plead that we have not had sufficient information; we cannot complain of want of warning. Life and death are set before us: the consequences of our choice are plainly pointed out; we are invited to forsake sin and turn to God; the most merciful pro-

mises of pardon and eternal life are made to us; and the Holy Spirit is promised, to renew our hearts. How then shall we escape, if we despise so many warnings and neglect so great salvation?

IV. The last aggravation of his crime was, the treacherous manner in which it was effected. "Betrayest thou the Son of Man *with a kiss?*" Must the badge of affection, the ordinary salutation of friendly intercourse in the age and country in which these words were spoken, be the signal for treachery and bloodshed? Judas had professed himself a disciple of Christ; he had been admitted, as his friend and follower, to his social and domestic circle; and now, under the garb of respect and affection, he determines to betray him into the hands of his bitterest enemies. They indeed sought his life; but they pretended to no attachment. Their crime was great, unspeakably great, in "crucifying the Lord of life and glory;" but Judas added to this the guilt of broken vows and perfidious hypocrisy.

And may we not in some measure continue to apply the parallel? The atheist, the scoffer, the professed unbeliever, the notorious profligate, openly oppose the cause of Christ; they are his avowed enemies; and it is said of all

such, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." But there are others who may be said to betray him; namely, those who call themselves his disciples, while they "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." There are many ways in which persons may do this in a greater or less degree. They may do it by false doctrines, or by an unholy and inconsistent life. Suppose that, professing to believe the Divine mission, the spotless character, and the perfect doctrines and precepts of Christ, we should deny his claim to be equal with the Father, as touching the Godhead, though inferior to him as touching his manhood, should we not, while calling ourselves his disciples, rob him of his highest honour, and take part with those who thought it blasphemous that he made himself equal with God? Again, if acknowledging his Divinity, we virtually set aside his atonement, by a proud trust in our own merits, are we not undermining the foundations of the religion we profess, and reducing the Divine Saviour to the level of a mere teacher and example, instead of a sacrifice, the only sacrifice, for the sins of the world? Again, if professing to trust alone in his atonement, and perhaps vaunting loudly of the efficacy of faith, we slight either in word or practice the obliga-

tions of his law, are we not betraying him under the pretence of friendship, setting his commands at variance with his promises, and virtually maintaining that his Gospel leads to that most unscriptural conclusion, "Let us sin that grace may abound?"

In short, the neglect of prayer, the allowed indulgence of evil thoughts, a worldly spirit, all false, corrupting, or uncharitable conversation, and every sinful course of life, in those who profess and call themselves Christians, are a tacit abandonment and betraying of Christ. Who indeed can say that he has been truly faithful to him? There is, however, an essential distinction between the treachery of Judas and the fall of Peter. It is to our shame that we have so often proved weak, timid, or inconsistent disciples, as in a memorable instance was the latter; but let us most of all dread lest we become final apostates, like the former; and the most effectual way to guard against this is, to watch and pray against every temptation to evil, and to beware of the first approaches to coldness or infidelity in the cause of our professed Lord.

SERMON VII.

GOD'S POWER BEYOND THE CHRISTIAN'S CONCEPTIONS.

EPHES. iii. 20, 21.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

ST. PAUL, in the prayer which precedes this sublime ascription of praise, had been offering several earnest petitions to God in behalf of his Ephesian charge. He introduces his prayer with a solemnity of address well calculated to prepare the mind of his reader for something affecting and important. With solemn prostration of body and humility of soul, he thus offers his ardent wishes for his new converts to the Christian faith: "For this cause," (namely, that they might not faint at his tribulations for them,) "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole

family in heaven and in earth is named." St. Paul possibly intended, by this introduction, to remove an objection which some Ephesian disciple might be ready to urge against himself, that because he was not of the house of Abraham, he was not interested in the Divine mercies. Being, therefore, the Apostle of the Gentiles, he anticipates this objection, by intimating, that the wall of partition was broken down, that the Jew no longer possessed exclusive privileges, but that the *whole* family in heaven and in earth was now united in Christ, and equally entitled to be called by his name.

The prayer itself by no means falls short of the expectation excited by so solemn a commencement. "That he would grant you," he continues, "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The whole of this passage is most full and expressive. Language sinks beneath the greatness of the Apostle's ideas, and the animation of his heart, while he endeavours to describe the love of Christ and its effects on the Christian. He

prays, that he may know that which, if taken in its extent, "passeth knowledge;" and even adds, that he "might be filled with *all the fulness of God.*"

How different are the wishes thus expressed by St. Paul, to those which usually appear in the intercourse of modern Christians! While we are daily desiring all *worldly* advantages for our friends, how seldom do we thus feel in earnest for the welfare of their souls! Let us learn, from the Apostle's example, to cherish a more lively interest in the spiritual concerns of each other; that in every intercourse and correspondence of life, we may evidence something at least of that Christian anxiety which he felt when he uttered those words; "This thing I wish, even your perfection."

But might not ignorance or unbelief have suggested to some Ephesian convert, that the Apostle's requests were far too great to be complied with, and included blessings of too high a nature to become the lot of the Christian upon earth? St. Paul, without mentioning this objection, effectually sets it aside by the words which conclude his prayer, and which we now propose to examine.

In doing so, let us consider,

First, The power of God to supply the Christian's wants.

Secondly, The specimen and pledge which

Christians have of that power in their own experience.

Thirdly, The return of glory due to God for his exertion of this power.

First, The power of God to supply the Christian's wants.—It is necessary to consider the power of God, not so much in its own nature, as in its relation to his people in every age of the world. St. Paul, who had long known this power upon earth, and had even had a premature discovery of it in the third heavens, bears testimony in the text, that it is beyond the utmost prayer of faith—"all that we can ask;" and beyond the highest conceptions of the mind—"all that we can think." He had not forgotten the time, when, praying for a release from the thorn in the flesh, he had found the efficacy of this power, in teaching him rather to bear it; thus perfecting strength in his weakness. He had also, in his labours among the enemies of the Gospel, known in himself the same support that was promised to Jeremiah, when it was said, "They shall fight against thee, but shall not prevail; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." He testifies, therefore, of this power, that it was inconceivable and inexhaustible; and, indeed, no power less than infinite could be adequate to every wish and every want of the human soul.

But it is not in this speculative view only that the Christian regards the ability of God to supply his wants. In addition to exciting his admiration, it strengthens his trust, and increases his joy.

It strengthens his trust.—The Christian is one who has founded his hopes upon God. Every thing, therefore, that tends to make him more sensible of the fulness and power of the Almighty, tends to encourage a filial confidence; since he knows that power to be employed in promoting his welfare and safety. When, therefore, he feels his own weakness, how consoling is it to him to reflect that his Father which is in heaven is infinitely strong! When he thinks he has implored too much at the Throne of Mercy, what joy does it give him to remember, that God can do exceeding abundantly above all he asks, or even thinks!

Thus, in addition to strengthening the Christian's trust, *it increases his joy.*—This is, indeed, closely connected with the former; for the stronger and more genuine our faith, the more fixed and lively our spiritual enjoyment. It is true, indeed, that the Christian's fears arise oftener from a doubt of God's willingness than of his ability; but when he considers how great and aggravated have been his transgressions, he almost doubts whether the promises made in the Gospel *can* be applicable to himself, or

whether one who has erred from God's ways so widely, and for so long a time, may find mercy at last. To such a one it is an important truth, that God is *able*, as well as willing, to hear and answer his prayers; *able*, not in point of mere power only, but consistently with all his attributes and perfections. His justice does not oppose his mercy. While sin uncancelled separated between man and God, how could our prayers be heard or accepted by that all-righteous Judge? But a Saviour having died, sin being pardoned, and the heart renewed, nothing remains to make it inconsistent with the Divine Majesty to grant our requests, being offered up through faith in Him who is the way of access to the Father.

Secondly, We are to consider the specimen and pledge which the Christian has of this Divine power in his own heart. St. Paul says, "*According to the power that worketh in us.*"—The power of God was first exerted in raising us from our original dust, in breathing into us the breath of life, and preserving us to the present moment from all the dangers that threatened our destruction. Each of these is a proof and pledge of the power of God in us, and demands our admiration and gratitude; but it is to a far greater exemplification of this power that the Apostle alludes. The philoso-

pher, when he would discover more of the power of God, begins to examine more attentively the works of nature; but, in addition to this, the Christian can appeal to that power as exerted in raising him from the death of trespasses and sins. He has been born again, and created anew in Christ Jesus. When he compares his present desires and fears, his hopes and sorrows, his motives and enjoyments, with those which once influenced him, he finds himself transformed in the spirit of his mind. Being, therefore, strong in faith, he no longer doubts that God can do more than he can ask or think, since, if he had no other evidence, he might appeal, in numberless cases, to his own experience of the Divine love and power. Will my heavenly Parent, he argues, who has already done so much for me, forsake me at last? Will He, who has given his only Son for me, withhold any lesser blessing? Can He, who has so fully proved his power, be unable, or He, who has so uniformly proved his infinite love, be unwilling, to make me holy and happy? Every want, therefore, should remind me of Him who is ready to supply it. When weak, may I rely on Him who is all-powerful! when I most feel my ignorance, may I look to him who is all-wise! when beset with dangers and with enemies, may I pray to him who is ever watchful! in a word, may every defect in myself teach me

increasingly to admire, to adore, and to repose in, the perfections of my God.

But, it may be asked, will not the contemplation of such privileges encourage a feeling of spiritual pride, and destroy that deep sense of humility and dependence which becomes a fallen and guilty creature? No; far from this being the case, the same text that teaches the Christian his privilege, reminds him of his dependence. Neither the power nor the glory is ascribed *to us*. It is the power *of God* that worketh in us, and therefore the Apostle infers, "To HIM be glory." Which leads us,

Thirdly, To consider the return of glory due to God for his exertion of this power.—It would be needless to prove generally, that we ought to feel gratitude to God, and ought to express it by rendering glory to his Name. This is not only a religious, but a natural and reasonable, service. We owe it to him as our Maker, our Preserver, and our Benefactor. But the particular nature, and the higher causes, of this glory, cannot be known but by the Gospel. St. Paul, in the words before us, mentions three very important circumstances relative to it; namely, the persons by whom it is paid, *the church*,—the Source from which it is derived, *Christ Jesus*,—and *its perpetuity*, world without end.

1. This glory is in *the church*.—That portion of Divine glory which is displayed by the works of nature and the dispensations of Providence, by the justice shewn in the punishment of fallen men and angels, and even by the eternal bliss of those who kept their first estate, is quite unnoticed by the Apostle. He hastens to a yet more wonderful theme of adoration. Forgetting, as it were, every other source of Divine glory, he speaks only of that derived from the redeemed church. Angels who never fell will praise their Creator for the vast blessings they enjoy; but the spirits of the just made perfect will have a theme of gratitude peculiar to themselves. For "I heard," said the Apostle John, "as it were a *new* song before the Throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from earth." Thus *the church* will add a new song of glory to God. The church also will doubtless be loudest in the *general* song of praise, on account of the contrast with their former state. When they view the height to which they are raised, they will look back, we may imagine, to the depth of misery into which they had fallen: when they feel conscious of unutterable felicity, they will doubtless remember that they were those

who came out of great tribulation; they will enjoy the greater delight in unspotted holiness, by calling to mind how long they carried with them a body of sin; and will triumph more loudly in their victory, while they reflect upon the perils of the contest.

These claims of the Almighty on our gratitude and praise apply exclusively to the redeemed church, and a lively consciousness of them will be a most effectual incitement to holiness; for we must not imagine, that the glory of God in the church is confined to the church *triumphant*. The church, even while "militant here on earth," may and must contribute to his glory. We were created and redeemed for this very end, that we might shew forth his praise, not only in heaven, but even in the present world; and the way to evince it is by consistency and holiness of conduct. We should be willing to spend and be spent in his service. If we are real disciples of Christ, *it is our privilege* to exhibit his glory: every prayer offered in humility and faith, every action performed from Christian motives, every trouble sustained for the cause of God, contributes to his glory. And how great is the privilege thus to join with angels and archangels, and the church universal, in so ennobling a service; especially as our own happiness is inseparably

connected with the performance of the duty! Let us, then, earnestly pray to that Spirit by whose sanctifying influences alone we can do unto God true and laudable service, that in every thought, word, and work, we may be enabled to shew forth the glory of our Redeemer.

2. The second circumstance mentioned by the Apostle respecting this glory is, the Source from which it is derived—*Christ Jesus.*—This, being in some measure included in the former circumstance, needs not be again proved. We may, however, learn from this, a practical distinction between a true and a false church. The members of the former attribute the glory of their redemption to Christ; while those of the latter, however variously distinguished in name or doctrine, assume the whole or part of it to themselves. He who imagines that his own works will procure his salvation, deprives God of his honour; for the glory which he receives for the salvation of man is *only* through Christ. But the humble penitent, trusting implicitly to the merits of his Saviour, will join with sincerity in singing those songs of praise which St. John repeatedly assures us are sung by the church triumphant above. They are completely in unison with the feelings and sentiments of such a man, since they attribute glory to God, through Him who alone hath re-

deemed us by his blood. In this, as in other things, the Church of England evidences itself to be a branch of the church of God. Every supplication for mercy, every acknowledgment of past blessings, and every song of praise, is addressed to the Divine Majesty only in the name and through the merits of our Saviour Christ. That church whose errors we profess to renounce, still continues to supplicate God, not exclusively through Christ, but through the medium of saints, and angels, and martyrs; but He who giveth not his honour to another, receives no ascription of glory, or petition for favour, but through the intercession of his dearly beloved Son.

3. The last circumstance mentioned by the Apostle respecting this glory is *its perpetuity*: "To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, *throughout all ages, world without end.*"—This perpetuity of the Divine glory, when taken in connexion with what had gone before, is a most consolatory truth. It is a decisive argument for *the eternity* of the church's happiness; for the dead cannot praise God. While, therefore, God himself shall exist, the church shall endure, to contribute to his glory. The song of praise, now so often interrupted, shall then be uniform; now so short, shall then be eternal; now so feeble, shall then be "loud as the voice of many waters." If we look forward into endless

duration as far as the human mind can stretch, this glory will be still new and still beginning. The song of adoration shall never tire the lip of the happy spirit, or weary the ear of his beneficent Redeemer; and eternity itself, far from being tedious, will not suffice to utter all the praises of Him who loved us, and gave himself for us.

But while we contemplate the eternity of God's glory in the church, with what force does the important question recur, Are we true members of that church? Are we shewing forth the glory of God on earth? For if not, what ground have we for supposing we shall be permitted, with the church triumphant, to celebrate it in heaven? Thousands "who profess and call themselves Christians," do not in reality belong to this church. One denies the Divinity of the Redeemer; another depends, in whole or in part, upon his own righteousness for salvation; another seems to begin well, but turns back to the world, and crucifies the Saviour afresh; and still a larger number are wholly thoughtless and indifferent on the subject. Now none of these can add, so far as their conduct is a test of their real views, that solemn Amen with which the Apostle concludes and confirms his ascription of praise. Their life is in perpetual variance with such a sentiment;

and their eternal exclusion from the privileges of that church, of which they were members only in name and not in reality, will prove how awful a thing it is to have heard of the blessings of the Gospel, and to have rejected them till the space for repentance is for ever passed.

SERMON VIII.

JOB'S SEEING GOD.

JOB xlii. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

THESE words were uttered by Job at a very remarkable period of his affecting history. Up to this moment, his sorrows had been unassuaged: the Almighty seemed fiercely to contend with him, and his arrows drank up his spirit. His friends also had bitterly reproached him, and he remained unvindicated from their charges; and no ray of hope had hitherto burst through the gloom that surrounded him. But the verses that follow our text point out a most favourable change in his condition. "The Lord," it is said, "turned the captivity of Job;" the Divine anger was also kindled against his friends, who had spoken unfeelingly to him in his affliction, and for whom he was directed to pray: and God accepted his intercession on

their behalf. This change in the conduct of God towards Job was preceded by a change in the mind of Job himself; the nature of which change is shewn in the words of our text. Formerly he had justified himself, as we find up to the thirty-first chapter; after which he begins to condemn himself; he is humbled on account of his transgressions. "He answered the Lord," it is said in the first verse of the chapter before us—but not as he had formerly spoken, in the language either of self-applause, or of repining against the dispensations of God; for he had wisely determined to speak no longer in this manner; "Behold," said he, "I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer *again;* yea twice, but I will proceed no further:"—but "he answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I understood not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak"—not, however, to boast of his wisdom, or to complain of the appointments of God's providence, but as a suppliant before his Judge; for, continues he, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;

but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

This instructive passage will lead us, first, To inquire what we are to understand in the text by "seeing" God, and into the effects which such a sight is calculated to produce; and, secondly, To apply the subject to our own times and circumstances.

First, then, let us inquire what we are to understand in the text by seeing God; for Job says, that he had heard of him before by the hearing of the ear, but now his eye saw him. He does not mean through his bodily senses; for in this manner, says our Saviour, "no man hath seen God at any time." "God is a Spirit;" "the King invisible," "dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see." Even when God revealed himself to the people of Israel, "they saw no manner of similitude," nor were they permitted to form any image or intended representation of him. The other manifestations also of him, described in the Old Testament, are to be understood in a manner not inconsistent with the declaration of his being "the invisible God." Whether a voice was heard, or an appearance was seen, it was only an instrument which the Almighty saw fit to employ in holding sensible communion with his servants of old, for special

ends; and, such manifestations being altogether of an extraordinary nature, and having long since ceased, should any person in these later ages profess to be favoured with new revelations from God, he would either be deceived himself, or be attempting to deceive others. And though in the case of Job, who lived long before the volume of Revelation was closed, probably before the age of Moses, when nothing of it is known to have existed except in tradition, God conveyed his instructions in a peculiar manner, "speaking to him out of the whirlwind;" yet the knowledge which Job thus acquired, important as it was, was only of the same kind which each of us may possess by means of the assistances graciously afforded us in the word and the providence of God. It was not so much a new or miraculous knowledge of God which he had obtained, as a practical conviction and application of those truths respecting him which he had known before, but which had not been before brought home to his heart and conscience with their due force, so as to produce the fruits of repentance, humility, and submission to the will of God. He had heard of the wisdom, the power, and the providence of the Creator; of his justice, his mercy, and the veneration due to him—his friends, especially Eliphaz, and even Job himself, had uttered many admirable maxims on these subjects—but now

his knowledge had become more than ever practical in its effects. He felt assured that God could do all things; that none could resist his will; yet that it was never too late to hope for his mercy. The display which had been set before him of the Divine glory, had so humbled him in his own estimation, that "he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes." For though he had been eminently distinguished for his amiable and charitable conduct; and though he was described by the Almighty himself as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil;" yet, when he viewed the infinite Majesty of God, and his Almighty Power and Wisdom, as displayed in all his works; and, on the other hand, the frailty of man, his weakness, his ignorance, and the brevity of his "appointed time upon earth," he felt deeply abased in the presence of his Creator. All that he had before known and believed now recurred to his mind with new force, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, produced a powerful effect upon his judgment and affections. His knowledge was attended with such a lively faith as made it, according to the definition of the Apostle, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He had known and confessed many important doctrines and precepts of true religion at an earlier period of his history. He had

acknowledged, in the first place, his infinite obligations to God: "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." He had, further, confessed his sinfulness in the sight of God; for, though he vindicated his character against the unjust suspicions of his fellow-creatures, he knew that his righteousness extended not to his Creator: "If I justify myself," said he, "mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." He could trust to no merit of his own: for he felt so forcibly the imperfection of his best observances in the sight of an infinitely holy God, that he says, "If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head:" and again, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." He knew, also, that the eye of God was ever fixed upon him; that he was acquainted with all his thoughts, and words, and actions, and would bring him to a strict account for them: "If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity." Thus displaying the most evident marks of true contrition and repentance, and of a right knowledge both of his Maker and of himself, he earnestly wished for a Mediator between God and man: for, said he, "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer

him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any Day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."—Under these circumstances of penitence and self-abasement, he resorted to the only true source of safety or repose: his only hope was in God. "See Thou mine affliction," said he, "for it increaseth." "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;—he also shall be my salvation." He knew that God could, and would, deliver him, and in the end make all things, and not least his severe afflictions, work together for his good. "When he hath tried me," said he, "I shall come forth like gold;" elsewhere adding, with the most exalted faith and confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Yet, all his former knowledge of these things, clear and accurate as it once seemed, appeared now to him but like a verbal report, compared with the vivid distinctness of his present convictions. He had heard, he now saw: he had believed, but his faith now became more than ever active and influential in its character. And the effect was that which has been already described: "I abhor myself," said he, "and repent in dust and ashes." His life, as he him-

self frequently declares, had not been openly immoral—so far from it, he was distinguished for his virtues—yet now, at the sight of the majesty and holiness of God, he repents and abhors himself; doubtless with a particular allusion to those symptoms of pride, and discontent, and murmuring, which, notwithstanding he was remarkable, considering the depth of his afflictions, for his patience, too frequently broke out in hasty and unadvised speeches. He seems to have felt bitterly his want of perfect resignation to the will of God, and of confidence in his wisdom and his mercy; and also his presumption and folly in repining at the allotments of his Divine providence. Before, he mourned chiefly for his afflictions; now, he mourns for his sinfulness in the sight of God: and he exhibits his penitence by the most expressive emblems; he repents "in dust and ashes."

Such was the nature of the sight which Job obtained of God, and the effects which it produced upon him. Bearing these in mind, let us proceed,

Secondly, To apply the subject to our own times and circumstances.—We also have heard of God by the hearing of the ear. We were born in a Christian country; we have, perhaps, had the benefits of early Christian education; of frequent instruction in the word of God; of

the prayers and example of religious friends; of faithful addresses to our conscience from the pulpit; and of the sacred Scriptures for our private study: we cannot, therefore, be wholly ignorant of our obligations to God; of what he requires of us, or promises to us—in short, of our own sinfulness and misery, and of the way of salvation as revealed in his word. Yet, with all our advantages, our professed religion and knowledge of God may have been hitherto but "the hearing of the ear." The word preached, or otherwise conveyed to our ears and understandings, may never have profited us, not being mixed with faith. The effect of a true and lively faith is described in Scripture as seeing God. It was by this faith that "Moses endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Now, there are too many, even of those who call themselves Christians, who "live without God in the world." He is as much unseen by the eye of their mind as by their bodily senses. Though educated in a professed knowledge of him, though created by his power, surrounded with innumerable proofs of his presence, sustained by his bounty, and experiencing every moment the effects of his infinite goodness, "he is not in all their thoughts." They "will not seek after God." They hold no true communion with him by prayer or devout meditation; they do not strive to love him with all their heart,

and soul, and mind, and strength; or to come to a knowledge of his will, with a view to a prompt and cordial obedience to it. His terrors do not alarm them; his goodness does not attract them. Far from "setting the Lord always before them," the practical language of their conduct is rather, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

But is not this a heinous sin? Is it not also the height of folly? Will it profit us, at the Last Day, that we have heard of God by the hearing of the ear, if we have no true practical knowledge of him, like that of Job in our text? Let us then "acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace; and thereby good shall come unto us." And let us ever remember, that the only medium of this peace and intercourse between God and man is Christ Jesus the Mediator. By him alone can we obtain the pardon of our sins, and access to the God and Father of our spirits. This spiritual view of "Him who is invisible" will humble us in our own estimation. It will also tend to preserve us from sin, and to incline us to holiness of heart and life; for there is no guard so effectual against every rising temptation, as a reverential sense of the power and the presence of God; no motive so forcible in inciting to a cheerful obedience to his commands, as gratitude for his mercies, especially the inestimable gift of

his Son to die for our transgressions. It will also promote in us the love of our neighbour; for "he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Let us not, then, be so engrossed with the things which are seen and temporal, as to forget the things which are unseen and eternal; and let us constantly pray for the blessed influence of God's Holy Spirit, to enable us to set our affections upon things above, and not upon things upon the earth.

SERMON IX.

CHARACTER AND BENEFITS OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

HEB. xiii. 1.

Let brotherly love continue.

WE often hear the inquiry, What are the doctrines of the Gospel? and a most important inquiry it is: for what can be of greater moment than to learn what our Creator has revealed to us; in what relationship we stand towards him; how we may enjoy his favour; what he says of us; what he commands us; what he has done for us; especially all that relates to the redemption of our fallen race through Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, and our pardon and justification through that meritorious sacrifice, freely by faith, with the sanctification of our souls by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, and the hopes of eternal glory in the world to come. But important as are the doctrines of the Gospel, it is not enough to ask, What must we believe? we must also inquire, What is the spirit of the Gospel, and how must we live? The heart must

be influenced as well as the understanding. It is not sufficient to know the will of God, we must also love it; our Saviour must be our pattern as well as our sacrifice; and to copy his blessed example, to live like him in meekness, lowliness, and self-denial, in love to God and to man for God's sake, must be our constant effort and unceasing prayer.

This love is the very spirit of the Gospel; but it is a spirit which we are too apt to forget. It is far more easy to attend Divine worship, to take up a form of religion, to be zealous for a system of doctrines, and even to be active in many schemes of seeming charity, than really to live in a spirit of Christian love. Yet this spirit is a distinguishing mark of the truth of our union to Christ, and without it we are none of his. If there be any one of our fellow-creatures, even one who had greatly injured us, to whom we would deliberately act otherwise than in that temper which the Gospel requires, we should be destitute of that powerful evidence of our being true disciples of Christ, which flows from our resembling in spirit our Divine Master, who gave his life for an ungrateful world, and prayed for those who spitefully entreated him, and put him to death.

But it is not so much the general duty of love to our fellow-creatures which we are now to consider, as one particular portion of that love;

one section as it were of the second table of the Law, which is comprised in the apostolic precept, "Love the brotherhood." It is commanded, "Do good unto all men;" but it is added, "especially unto them which are of the household of faith;" or, in the words of our text, "Let brotherly love continue." In discoursing upon this apostolic command, we shall first shew what the Apostle intends by brotherly love; and, secondly, the importance of his exhortation to maintain it.

First, then, what is brotherly love? There is, as we have seen, a duty of sympathy and affection which we owe to all our fellow-creatures; a general tie of human nature which binds us to all mankind. All were made by the same hand, all are partakers of the same fallen nature, all are placed in the same scene of trial, all are interested in the same redemption, all are hastening to the same eternal world; and our gracious Creator, who makes his sun to shine alike upon the evil and the good, wills that without distinction of age, or clime, or station, we should love our neighbour as ourselves. This love worketh no ill to our neighbour, and is therefore the fulfilling of the law. There are, again, the more limited ties of country, relationship, and friendly attachment; all of which are sanctioned by the word of God; for we find our

blessed Saviour himself weeping over the fated land of his nativity with peculiar tenderness; acknowledging the claims of kindred, even in the hour of his last agony, in consigning his mother to the care of his beloved disciple; and of an affectionate friendship in the case of that disciple himself, who leaned on his bosom, as also in the instance of Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus, whom it is said he loved, and over the mortal remains of one of whom he wept with endearing sympathy. But, distinct from the general ties of human nature, the cement of civil and social union, and the endearments of natural affection, there is a bond of Christian brotherhood, a sacred friendship, a communion of saints, which it is the duty and the privilege of all the faithful in Christ Jesus to maintain. Let us inquire whom this love embraces, and what it demands.

1. Whom does this brotherly love comprise in its hallowed range? The question answers itself; all who are brethren. It has a limit; but it is not the limit of high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; it is not the limit of sect, or party, or nation; of natural inclination or dislike; it is only the limit of their being brethren in Christ Jesus; according to the apostolical benediction, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Wherever the image of Christ is visible

it is to be beloved. "Other sheep," said our Lord, "have I which are not of this fold;" but all were equally his flock, and equally objects of his care. Union to Christ, among true Christians, is a bond of union with each other. They are members of one body, he being the head; stones cemented into one building, he being the foundation and corner-stone. We cannot, indeed, unclasp the Lamb's book of life, to read whose names are registered in its golden pages; but we may judge of it by the twofold test of sound doctrine and a holy life; and in proportion as these are visible, ought Christian endearment to be strengthened. For this brotherly affection is not spurious candour; it is not a false charity built upon the ruins of all that God himself has declared concerning those who love him, and those who love him not; it does not embrace, in the ample folds of its mantle, either false doctrines or a corrupt life; nor does it seek to confound light with darkness, or darkness with light. Its language is, "Whosoever will do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother." This is a very simple, but most useful test, "Whosoever will do the will of God." Not, whosoever is of our own particular persuasion; or whose religious habits most comport with our own; or those only who have made pre-eminent attainments in piety;

but whosoever is endeavouring to know and do the will of God; whosoever in humility and simplicity of heart, under the guiding influences of the Holy Spirit, is seeking the way of eternal life; believing the record which God has given of his Son, and endeavouring to follow his holy example: for this is the will of God, this is his commandment, "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment."

2. Having seen whom this brotherly love comprises, let us examine what it requires. It demands not the surrender of our judgment, much less any violation of our conscience; it asks not that we should believe without evidence, or against evidence; it is not inconsistent with many different shades of opinion and habits of life; it does not require that we should yield any thing that we consider right or Christian; or that we should approve of what we think the contrary. It would be but a counterfeit of brotherly love, to mistake for it mere natural amiableness of temper; or spiritual ignorance, which knows not the distinctions between truth and falsehood; or indifference, which heeds them not; or a time-serving worldly spirit, which can be all things to all men, not for their good to edifying, but for its own selfish purposes. True Christian affection requires not, but resists, all such practices. "Let love,"

said the Apostle Paul, "be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." And again; "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But still it requires much of us; it requires warm attachment to our Christian brethren; and ardent wishes and fervent prayers for their welfare. It requires, also, what is often more difficult, a friendly construction of their actions; a union of heart, where, in the exercise of their best judgment, they differ from ourselves in matters not of essential moment; and a readiness to unite with them wherever circumstances allow, for objects which ought to be equally dear to both. It is in truth an anticipation of the heavenly world, where all who have lived and died in the love of God and the faith of Christ shall be united as worshippers in one temple, loving and beloved by all around them, and for ever happy in the communion of just men made perfect, joined to the heavenly spirits who never fell, and all drinking deeply the streams of eternal blessedness which flow from the throne of God.

Having thus considered the character of brotherly love, we shall be the better prepared,

Secondly, To see the importance of the Apostle's injunction to maintain it: "Let brotherly

love continue." There was then danger of its ceasing, or growing cold; and there needed much prayer and vigilance to support the warmth and the brightness of its hallowed flame. The importance of maintaining it will appear from the following considerations.

1. It is a duty frequently urged in Scripture. We find it inculcated in our text; and our Saviour himself says, speaking to his disciples, and through them to the members of his church in every age, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." What God himself has thus enjoined must needs be of infinite moment; nor can a breach of this command, whatever excuse we may make for it, be considered in any other light than as a direct violation of his law; a violation the more aggravated as the transgressor professes to be inclined by the endearing ties of love and gratitude to obey the will of his heavenly Father.

2. The importance of brotherly love will further appear from a consideration of its blessed effects. In our own hearts it is fraught with peace and joy; and it assimilates us to God; for "God is love." In the communion of the visible church it promotes every good word and work, constraining even the enemies of religion to say, "How goodly a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It encourages the weak believer; it silences the

sceptic and the scoffer; and it comforts and edifies the advanced Christian. It also brings glory to God; for men thus take knowledge of the disciples of Christ, that they have been with their Divine Master, and have imbibed something of his blessed Spirit; and thus they are led, seeing their good works, to glorify their Father which is in heaven.

3. A spirit of brotherly love is important as a proof of our being true disciples of Christ, and meet for the kingdom of heaven; for "by this," said our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It was not by eager professions; it was not by angry disputations; it was not even by speculative attainments in religion; but it was by the practical proof of loving the followers of Christ, for the sake of the Master whom they served. In conformity with this doctrine of our Lord, was the declaration of his Apostle St. John, "By this ye know that ye have passed from death unto life, because ye love the brethren." Do we ask for a proof of our being among "the elect people of God?" the test is, "He hath chosen us that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Do we ask whether we are under the influence of his Spirit? "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Love is the temper of heaven; and the more therefore we grow in this Divine grace, distin-

guished from all counterfeits of it, and possessing our souls by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the more evident is our meetness to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Well then might the Apostle say, "Let brotherly love continue." He knew the many hazards which this heavenly exotic has to encounter in our chilling and tempestuous world. He knew how often, even among the true servants of Christ, differences of opinion are apt to issue in alienation of heart; he knew how much of pride and selfishness mixes up with our most holy things; he knew how difficult it is, from the frailty of man even at his best estate, to prevent discussions becoming controversies, and controversies schisms; he knew how ready we are to contend fiercely for doctrines which produce too little effect upon our deportment, and to mistake our own proud and impetuous tempers for Christian zeal. Hence he said, Whatever doubts, difficulties, or persecutions, may arise, "let brotherly love continue:" sacrifice not the substance of Christianity for the shadow; the spirit for the form; a resemblance to Christ, however imperfect, for a resemblance to Satan, who is called "the accuser of the brethren."

Let us then endeavour to profit by this apostolical precept, by applying it to our own circumstances. We form a portion of the

visible church of Christ militant here upon earth; we are surrounded by our fellow-worshippers, real and nominal, of many sentiments and many communions. Still there are the essential distinctions which have been mentioned; nor is it a sufficient reason for withdrawing from the fellowship of Christ's visible flock, that in his vineyard upon earth the wheat and the tares are suffered to grow together till the harvest. Faults and failings we must expect, and be prepared to bear. Worldliness, also, hypocrisy, and doubtful doctrine, may intrude—and would that they could be expelled! but we must not for this cause withdraw from the public communion of the professed Christian church, and become in bitterness of spirit accusers of the brethren, confounding in one indiscriminate censure the true and the false disciple; St. Peter who fell, with Judas who apostatized. There will ever be much to disapprove, and much to separate from; but even this must be done with meekness and humility, with forbearance towards others and suspicion of ourselves, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

But let us not deceive our hearts by any specious counterfeit of this heavenly virtue. The grace of love, like all other spiritual graces, must be grounded on true conversion of heart to God. It is not a natural amiableness, but a

Christian virtue. We cannot love either God, or his image upon earth, till we are reconciled to him by faith in Christ Jesus, adopted into his family, and at peace with him through the blood of the atonement. While, then, we inquire Do we love the household of faith? there arises a previous question, Are we ourselves members of that household? do we belong to that holy brotherhood of which Christ is the Head? are we one with him, and he with us? In religion, as in other things, we may unite ourselves with a favourite sect or party; but this is not the love of Christ, of his Gospel, or his church. We must love him because he has first loved us; to know the benefits of which, we must have felt our need of him as a Saviour, have repaired to him in faith and humility for pardon and acceptance with God, and by his grace have resolved, his Holy Spirit strengthening us, to devote ourselves to his service, and to be his faithful soldiers and servants as long as we live.

SERMON X.

DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

ACTS IX. 6.

And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

SUCH was the earnest inquiry of Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when, on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the infant church of Christ, he was arrested by an Omnipotent arm, and accosted, in words which penetrated with conviction to his heart, by that Almighty Saviour whom, in the persons of his faithful followers, he had so bitterly persecuted. How altered that fierce aspect! how quelled that haughty self-conceit! how changed those cruel threatenings! He trembles, and is astonished; and, prostrate before his offended Creator, his hitherto unknown and slighted Saviour, he submissively inquires, "What wilt thou have me to do?" As the first sin of mankind, that which expelled our fallen race from

paradise, was an act of deliberate opposition to the will of God; so the first trace of a desire to return to our spiritual allegiance is the wish to know and to do his will. This was the turning point in the conversion of the Apostle. He was not yet enlightened with a clear knowledge of Christianity, but he was prepared by the Holy Spirit for its reception by a sincere desire to obey the will of God. The seed of the word, afterwards sown, did not fall upon stony ground, but in "an honest and good heart:" the fallow ground had been ploughed up; penitence had softened the stubborn soil: so that, watered by the dews of God's blessing, and, fertilized by the genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness, the heavenly plant took deep root, and brought forth fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. According to our Lord's own declaration, wishing to "do the will of God," he had the promise that he should "know of the doctrine," and means were divinely provided for his instruction. The Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Many of the circumstances connected with St. Paul's conversion were miraculous, and are recorded, not as illustrations of the usual process by which men are brought to the knowledge and obedience of the faith, but chiefly perhaps as connected with the remarkable his-

tory of this great Apostle and of the early church, and as affording a strong testimony to the truth and power of the Christian religion; but the anxiety of the Apostle to know what God would have him to do, is a common, a never-failing, characteristic of true religion in every age, and as such deserves our serious consideration. We, like Saul of Tarsus, must each one of us solemnly inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and this with an earnest desire, first, to know the will of God, and, secondly, to do it. We shall endeavour to illustrate the operation of this two-fold desire, with a view to shew when it may be considered as sincere, and, as such, indicative of true repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, there must be an earnest desire to *know* God's will.—Faith, love, obedience, and every good fruit, are grounded on scriptural knowledge: we must know in whom we believe, what he requires of us, what he has promised to the obedient, what he has threatened against the disobedient. Now we may judge whether we really feel this desire to know God's will, by examining whether we are willing to surrender our own will to it—whether we are using the appointed means for coming to a knowledge of it—and whether we are making

use of this knowledge with a practical reference to our own particular circumstances.

1. The first token, then, of our sincerity in wishing to know the will of God, is *a willingness to surrender our own will to it, so far as it is known.* This was strikingly displayed in the case of the Apostle. His own will had been strongly bent towards his favourite object of extirpating Christianity; he was pursuing his journey with alacrity, charged with a commission from the high priest for that purpose; but now he renounces his own plans and projects, and, like his great Master, the wish of his soul is, "Not my will, but thine, be done." "I am willing," as though he had said, "to abandon my own schemes, and my most fondly cherished opinions. I ask not what would be most agreeable to myself, or what would be most applauded by my fellow-creatures; but what thou, O Lord—*thou*, who art my Creator, and hast a claim to my fullest obedience; thou, O Saviour, whom ignorantly I have persecuted—wouldst have me to do. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Command me what thou wilt; for thy commands must be holy, just, and good. Thou are infinitely wise, and canst not mistake; thou art supremely good; and what thou willest must be best for the happiness of thy creatures. It is thine to command; be it mine to listen and to obey."

2. A second token of our sincerity in wishing to know the will of God, is our diligent use of the *means which he has provided for our coming to an understanding of it*. The means in the Apostle's instance were, to repair to a particular place, where an instructor was divinely appointed to receive him, and to tell him what he should do. To have asked the question in the text, and not to have availed himself of the means of information pointed out in reply to his petition, would have shewn great hypocrisy and contempt for the command of God. Yet such is the conduct of many who esteem themselves to be Christians: they pray daily, "Thy will be done;" but they seek not to know what God demands; especially, they consult not the Scriptures, which are the record of his will; or, if they peruse them, it is only perhaps for the sake of form or amusement, without any serious desire of learning what he requires. Too many persons follow the dictates of their own fancy, or the current opinions of the world around them, instead of "inquiring at the mouth of the Lord." Now, this is quite inconsistent with a sincere use of the petition in the text. The chamberlain of Ethiopia, wishing to know the will of God, diligently perused the Scriptures, and entreated Philip to explain them to him. Cornelius was not contented indolently to say, "What is it, Lord?" but in compliance

with the answer to his inquiry, he sent immediately to Joppa for the Apostle Peter, and summoned his kinsmen and friends reverently to hear "what was commanded of God." We have not, indeed, in the present age, the same special and miraculous manifestations of God's will, because they are no longer necessary, since we have his revealed word, and various assistant means of religious edification and instruction. If we diligently use these, with humble prayer for the guidance of his Holy Spirit, we shall not go far, and, above all, not fatally, astray. The page of Revelation plainly declares what is God's will—not, indeed, all those mysteries of his secret counsels which our curiosity might wish to fathom, but all that concerns ourselves, so far as is necessary to be known by us for our present or eternal welfare; especially our duties and obligations towards God; the way to obtain the pardon of our sins through faith in the atonement of the Saviour; the virtues and graces which become our holy profession; and the rewards and punishments reserved for the righteous and the wicked in the unseen and eternal world. In that sacred page we are instructed in various branches of that will; different parts of it being at different times more particularly specified, but all combining in one consistent whole. Thus it is said, "This is the will of God, that ye believe

on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;" and again, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification;" and again, "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus;" and again, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;"—all of which are comprised by our Saviour in the two golden precepts of loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. In an especial manner is unfolded to us that part of God's will which relates to us as sinners: thus faith in the Saviour is spoken of as the will of God in the first of the texts just quoted; holiness, in the second; and in numerous other passages, repentance, contrition for sin, prayer, humility, and all other particulars comprehended in the Christian life.

3. But it is not a mere general inquiry into points of Christian doctrine or duty that is sufficient to shew that we are in earnest in wishing to know the will of God, unless also *we apply the investigation to our own particular case.* The inquiry of St. Paul was strictly personal: "What wilt thou have *me* to do?" And similar is the language of every sincere penitent: he hears the word of God speaking to his own heart, pointing out his own sins, urging upon him his own duties. Every discourse he listens to seems to say, "I have a message from God

unto thee;" and it finds an echo in his heart, "Thou art the man." He is not satisfied with general principles, but brings them practically to bear upon his own character and conduct. Is repentance enjoined, Have *I* repented? is faith essential, Do *I* believe? is holiness indispensable, Am *I* renewed in the spirit of my mind; am I living as a servant of God, a disciple of Christ, a candidate for heaven? And, besides the application of such general principles, he will seek to know the will of God as referable to his own individual circumstances: he will consider what are the sins, the duties, the difficulties of his peculiar age or calling; what God seems especially to require of him at that very time,—the daily trial, the daily duty; the neglected command, the besetting sin; to act, or to suffer; to learn, or to teach; in short, whatever may direct him to a perfect knowledge of the will of his Father which is in heaven. The man whose speculations are merely general and barren; who does not, by prayer, by self-examination, and by the application of Scripture to the discipline of his own heart and life, enter into the details of his own circumstances before God, cannot be said sincerely to offer the petition in the text.

II. But, secondly, our inquiring into the will of God must be accompanied with a wish

and endeavour to *do* it. This is, in truth, the best, the only test of our sincerity. True Christianity is ever practical in its effects: if, therefore, our faith be a mere creed or system of opinions, it profits us nothing. The inquiry of the ruler in the Gospel, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" appeared as sincere as the question of Saul of Tarsus in the text; but how different the result!—the former, when he learned that the will of God towards him was, that he should sell all that he had, and take up his cross and follow Christ, would not obey it; whereas the latter repaired to the appointed Instructor, received in faith the doctrines and commands of his Saviour, and followed his blessed steps, amidst a series of persecutions and afflictions, such, perhaps, as no other apostle or martyr of Jesus Christ was ever appointed to endure. Our knowledge of God's will will only aggravate our punishment, if we do it not. True, we never can do it perfectly or meritoriously; at best we are unprofitable servants, not entitled to the rewards of unerring obedience, but looking solely for the pardon of our acknowledged disobedience for the sake of the infinitely meritorious obedience of our Divine Surety; yet, still, the very test of our sincerity, the proof of our conversion, are the desire and effort to act up to the knowledge we possess.

When St. Paul asked the question, What wilt thou have me to do? it was his earnest resolution to do whatever might be commanded. He did not stipulate for an easy task; he did not wish to consult his own natural inclinations or partialities; but was willing, by the grace of God, to yield a *universal* and *voluntary* obedience to the Divine command.

1. His desire to obey was *universal* in its influence.—This is a conspicuous mark of true devotion of heart to God. It is not enough that we select a few favourite points of doctrine or duty as our standard; that, like the rich man before mentioned, we profess to be willing to keep all other commands, if we may only be covetous, and decline self-denial and bearing our allotted cross; that, like Saul, we slay the Amalekites, and spare Agag their king. No: the true standard of our submission to God, according to our daily prayer, is, that his will "may be done upon earth as it is done in heaven," and there it is done *universally* and *most willingly*. We must act with singleness of heart, and "have respect to *all* God's commandments." We must carry this desire into the whole course of our spiritual life and our secular conduct. There must be no reserved retreat of the soul where God is not to reign; where some favoured sin is to remain secure in its entrenchments, and some neglected duty to

seek in vain for admittance. Even if the will of God towards us should be that we should bear many heavy afflictions, or make many painful sacrifices—and who had more to endure or to give up than St. Paul?—we must not hesitate to submit to it.

2. And this submission must, further, be *voluntary*.—It is not a code of reluctant duties, that God requires. He would hear from us the language of cheerful self-dedication: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." And such will be our feeling, if our desire to do his will be duly grounded on *faith*, and *love*, and *gratitude*, as well as on a mere general sense of obligation and responsibility. On *faith*—for we shall thus trust him in the darkest hour of affliction, and in the most difficult path of duty. On *love*—for thus will our compliance with his commands be prompt and cordial; like the Psalmist, we shall rejoice in his testimonies; our affections will go before, and open the way for our actions; to know what is God's will, will be to make it our own; while to do any thing contrary to that will, would be to wound our own bosoms, as well as to offend the Great Object of our reverence and supreme regards. On *gratitude*—for the love of Christ will constrain us: we shall love him, because he first loved us; and, loving him, we shall seek to know and to per-

form his commands: we shall co-operate, as it were, with him: we shall not willingly resist or grieve his Holy Spirit, but shall pray for and value his sacred influences; and to do God's will, will be to us, as it was to our Great Example, our meat and our drink, the object of our desires, our prayers, and our unceasing solicitude.

In conclusion, let me ask, Are we seeking to know and to do the will of God? — Some, perhaps, are not seeking this at all; and others are not seeking it as conscience dictates and God commands: to each of these classes does the subject apply with fearful interest—and oh that it may be impressed upon their hearts by the Holy Spirit, to their eternal welfare! But others, perhaps, doubt whether they know the will of God aright; or, where they know it, they feel their inability to do it as they ought, and would desire. To each of these classes also, which include the true penitent, the sincere believer, our subject speaks in suitable words of hope and encouragement. If only they are honest in their inquiries, and act up to their convictions, they have the promise of God that "the meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." "If thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; if thou seekest her

as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; for the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Nor must this effort to know and to practise the will of God be confined to the first stages of our religious progress, but must continue and increase through life. It constitutes our highest advancement; it is our preparation for that heavenly world where the will of God is done perfectly and without reserve; it befits us, as the creatures of God, and especially as redeemed by the blood of Christ and professing to be dedicated to his service: and it is also our privilege, as well as our duty; for to submit to the will of God, lightens all the cares of life, while it opens to us the prospect of a blessed immortality.

SERMON XI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST.

EPHES. iii. 9, 10.

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

IT will assist us in comprehending the spirit of th is sublime declaration, if we consider four particulars which are included in it: namely, First, the mystery disclosed; Secondly, the time of its disclosure; Thirdly, the persons to whom it is disclosed; and Fourthly, the medium through which it is made known. The *mystery*, the Apostle says, is the manifold wisdom of God in the calling of the Gentiles to be partakers of the blessings of the Gospel. The *time* of its disclosure, he adds, is "now"—namely, under the Christian dispensation—it having before been "hid in God from the be-

ginning of the world." The *persons* to whom it is manifested, are said to be "all men"—that is, the inhabitants of this lower world—and also "the principalities and powers in heavenly places." And the *medium* through which it is disclosed, is stated to be "the church." All these particulars are expressly mentioned in the text: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."

It is, then, no barren or uninteresting subject on which we are about to meditate; it is a sacred mystery;—a mystery into which angels desire to look; a mystery in which we ourselves are specially concerned; and, oh, may we be enabled so to contemplate it, and so to apply it to our own circumstances, that it may become the joy and rejoicing of our hearts! It is not a tale of other ages, other nations, other worlds; to us, to each one of us severally, is this Gospel of salvation sent: and infinitely does it concern us to understand it; to receive it by faith; to walk worthy of it; to live in its spirit, to die in its hopes, and to be for ever happy in the blessedness which it unfolds. May the Spirit of all truth this day guide our meditations aright

upon this sacred theme, taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to our hearts by his Divine influences, through the instrumentality of his holy word!

First, then, the Apostle speaks of an important mystery which had been disclosed. This mystery was "the manifold wisdom of God" displayed in the free offer of pardon of sin, and all the blessings of the covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus, to the whole world. The Apostle had called it in a former verse of this chapter, "the mystery of Christ," "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs," that is, heirs with the faithful children of Abraham according to the flesh—"and of the same body," that is, the mystical body of Christ—and "partakers of his promise," the promise of God, "in Christ, by the Gospel." To the mind of a Jew, whose nation had been long a peculiar people, a people especially dedicated to God and partakers of his favour, while all other lands were immersed in the darkness of heathenism, a revelation of Divine mercy might not appear so wonderful in itself, as in the circumstance that this grace was to be manifested, not to his own nation only, but to the whole world; not merely to those who were nigh, but to those who were afar off; those whom the Jew at that period frowned upon, with much the same illiberal jealousy which the Gentiles in their turn ex-

ercised towards the outcast Jew. But whether to Jew or to Gentile, this disclosure of the mercy of God to fallen and guilty creatures, through the sacrifice and mediation of his beloved Son, was indeed a stupendous exhibition of "manifold wisdom." For whither can we turn for so striking an illustration of that heavenly attribute? Where can we see its varied operations so brightly displayed, so harmoniously blended? It exhibited infinite wisdom, in magnifying the law of God and making it honourable, yet redeeming those who by transgression were under its curse, and freeing them from its penalties. It exhibited infinite wisdom, in uniting the claims of justice with those of mercy; in pardoning the offender, yet shewing the infinite displeasure of God against the offence; in converting rebellious apostates into loyal and obedient subjects to the Divine Majesty; and where sin had abounded making grace much more abound. A mystery is that which is astonishing, that which passes our natural powers of reason to comprehend or account for. And such is the whole plan of our redemption. It was a mysterious dispensation, that, while apostate angels were left to perish without remedy, redemption was provided for fallen man. The way, also, in which the redemption was effected, was mysterious; for "we were not redeemed with corruptible

things, such as silver and gold;"—nothing human, nothing that we could give, was the price of our ransom; we had no merit, no virtue to offer; we were without strength, as well as without hope;—"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." For, notwithstanding our transgressions, "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Yet, though this plan of mercy was mysterious; though it was beyond the faculties of the human understanding to have devised, or the most ardent desire to have hoped for; it was not inconsistent with the highest exercise of reason. So far from it, though a mystery, it was a mystery of wisdom; the wisdom of God himself; and he who gave us the faculty of reason could not make its true dictates inconsistent with the declarations of his own wisdom. And we find this to be the fact: for the better we understand the plan of human redemption, the more we discern its excellence. While it secures pardon, it excites to holiness; while it honours God, it blesses man. It is free, without money and without price, and its benefits are received simply by faith; yet this very faith is the fruitful parent of good works; and all, far more than all, that sages and moralists in vain endeavoured to

effect by barren precepts, is accomplished by an exhibition of Divine mercy, the language of which is equally "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and "Go and sin no more."

Such is the mystery of wisdom which the Apostle mentions in the text. Let us consider,

Secondly, the time of its disclosure. He speaks of it as recent: it had been hid, he says, from the beginning of the world, but had "now" been made manifest. And had the wisdom of God, then, never been known before? Had he left himself without witness among his creatures, from the foundation of the world to the days of the Apostles? Was it not known in the heavenly regions, when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy? And is it not said of Wisdom, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was?" And if from eternity we pass on to the commencement of time, are we not told, "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding hath he established the heavens?" And was not boundless wisdom exhibited in the creation of mankind, and in all the arrangements of the Divine providence, from the creation of our first parents to the present moment? Can we read the

Scripture narrative, and not see in it constant traces of a wisdom which nothing could perplex, as much as of power which nothing could withstand, and of love which not even the multiplied transgressions of mankind could subdue? And was not the wisdom of God, thus displayed from eternity, "manifold," as well as infinite? did it not comprehend all that related to the creation, the government, and the well-being of the universe, with all its wants, and under all its aspects? Why, then, does the Apostle assert that the manifold wisdom of God had hitherto been a mystery, hid from former ages, and revealed only at the promulgation of the Christian dispensation?—He speaks comparatively, and with particular reference, as we have already seen, to the extension of the blessings of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Hitherto life and immortality, though abundantly shadowed forth, had not been fully brought to light; nor did even the disciples of our Lord himself clearly understand that the Messiah was to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of his people Israel." The prophecies of the Old Testament had indeed largely spoken of this mystery of Divine mercy, and set forth the wisdom of God in the redemption of the world, through the obedience unto death of his coequal Son: but a veil was upon the hearts and understandings of mankind; a more clear and

explicit revelation was necessary; so that He who had at sundry times and in divers manners spoken in times past by the prophets, saw fit, at length, to speak by his own Son. Compared with the fulness of this revelation, all former manifestations were feeble. It was now that the way of salvation was to be universally proclaimed; the glad tidings were to go out to all nations; and they who had long sat in darkness and the shadow of death, now for the first time beheld the meridian splendour of the Sun of Righteousness beaming upon them with healing in his wings. Why this particular time was chosen, we are not informed: the mystery, it is said in our text, had been "hid in God;" and he was not constrained to open to us the secrets of his eternal wisdom. In the fulness of time, however, according to the fore-ordaining of his all-perfect will, his beloved Son was born into our world, and fulfilled those purposes of Divine grace which he had undertaken to accomplish. And reason enough might it be for the postponement of this purpose of mercy, that in the mean time its necessity had been the more fully proved. The guilt and impenitence of mankind had been so fully displayed, as for ever to justify, in the sight of all created beings, the righteous awards of Jehovah; and the inability of human wisdom to devise, and of human strength to execute, any plan of re-

demption, which should at once honour God and rescue man, had been proved, beyond the possibility of future denial, by four thousand years of sin, misery, and spiritual ignorance. At length, all the preparations for this manifestation of Divine goodness being complete, the atonement was offered, and the message went abroad: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

The nature of this mystery of Divine wisdom, and the period chosen for its promulgation, having been noticed, we proceed to consider,

Thirdly, the persons to whom the disclosure was made. The Apostle says in our text, first, "all men;" the whole of our fallen race, without distinction of age, or rank, or nation. It had been partly made known within the precincts of paradise, when, at the fall of man, the promise was given of a Deliverer who should bruise the serpent's head: it was foretold to the patriarchs of old; Abraham, especially, saw afar off the day of Christ, and was glad: and it was, as it were, visibly embodied in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and proclaimed by a long succession of inspired prophets. Still the communication was but partial. The nation of Israel had indeed the lively oracles

of God, so far as then revealed; but the world at large was in darkness; so that even the most learned and enlightened nations of antiquity were not better informed respecting the character of God, the nature of the human soul, the fallen and helpless condition of mankind, and the only way of pardon and acceptance, than the most ignorant barbarian. But now the message of mercy was to be made known to the whole world; now were to be fulfilled those prophecies which foretold that the heathen should be given to Christ for his heritage, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; now was the wall of partition betwen Jew and Gentile broken down; now was the whole family of believers in heaven and earth named of Christ, the common Lord and Saviour of all; and now began that dispensation of Evangelical illumination and grace under which we at this moment live, and the knowledge of which is to be diffused more and more widely, till the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. All men have not yet heard, much less cordially received the message; but the promise is made, the word has gone forth, and soon the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

But the Apostle does not confine the disclo-

sure of this mystery to the human race; for he adds, that "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places" is made known, by the Gospel, "the manifold wisdom of God." And how greatly does it elevate our feeble conceptions of the glory of this Divine mystery of mercy in the redemption of mankind, that the most exalted archangels in heaven desire to look into it! Though having no personal concern in the sacrifice of Christ, and not themselves needing an atonement, they see in this plan of Divine mercy so bright a manifestation of the attributes of their adorable Creator, the author of all their blessedness, that they rejoice to contemplate the heights, and lengths, and breadths, and depths of the love of God in Christ Jesus to a fallen and guilty race. Yes, never shall there cease to be a grateful choir to swell the anthem of praise "to Him who loved us, and gave himself for us;" Him "who was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood." For, even if the whole human race had refused to acknowledge this Divine beneficence, if not one of the sons and daughters of Adam had embraced the offered mercy, heaven would not have wanted worshippers, the praises of God would not have been unsung: the principalities and powers of the heavenly world, who "rest not day nor night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is,

and is to come," would add to their wonted anthem "a new song," as this new and brightest illustration of his power and wisdom and goodness awakened in them still higher conceptions of his all-perfect attributes. But, no: they will not be thus left alone; for, debased as is our nature by the Fall, and hardened as it is by actual transgression, it will still, through the reclaiming power of God, supply a company which no man can number, to join in that heavenly chorus of love and gratitude: so that both "the voice of many angels around the throne," and that of "the spirits of the just made perfect," yea, "every creature which is in heaven and on the earth," shall be heard, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Thus, from the consideration of the mystery of Divine wisdom disclosed, the time of its disclosure, and the persons to whom it is communicated, we are led,

Fourthly, to the medium through which it is made known—namely, "by the church." There had not been wanting, as we have seen, other channels of communication. The works of creation had not spoken in vain; the whole course of the providence of God, both in heaven and on earth, had not been lost upon such

willing and intelligent spectators of his wisdom and goodness. But a still nobler survey was to be exhibited through the medium of the church of Christ. There the principalities and powers of heaven might trace the mystery of the wisdom of God, unfolded in the course of successive ages; the display becoming brighter and brighter as the dawn became visible, the twilight vanished, the sun broke forth, and the noon-tide of celestial day enlightened and cheered a perishing world. Angels had been present at each succeeding manifestation. They had heard the promise which was added to the curse pronounced at the expulsion from paradise; for they were stationed there after the Fall, with a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life. They communed with the patriarchs;—they attended when the Law of Moses was given, by which the mystery of redemption was more fully shadowed forth;—an angel smote the first-born of Egypt, and assisted the chosen race of Israel;—an angel foretold the birth of that Deliverer, who should "save his people from their sins;"—they were present at his advent; and assembled in a multitude on that memorable day, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men;"—they ministered to the incarnate Saviour when he was in the wilderness tempted of the devil;—

they deserted him not in his agony in the garden of Gethsemane: when his disciples slept, an angel from heaven strengthened him;—angels announced his resurrection;—they formed a triumphant retinue at his ascension;—they beheld the struggles of his infant church;—and now they witnessed the manifold wisdom of God visibly displayed in the extension of the benefits of his atonement and the call of the Gospel to the whole world. Thus, by means of their intimate acquaintance with the church of Christ, they are ever acquiring more enlarged views of his love and power: they rejoice over every sinner that repenteth; they minister to his faithful servants amidst their conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil; they watch over their death-bed, so that though it were but Lazarus, a beggar, that died in the faith of Christ, they were ready to convoy his redeemed spirit to the bosom of his Saviour, and the everlasting enjoyments of the heavenly world.

And do the principalities and powers above, who have no personal interest in the atonement, thus delight to contemplate, by means of it, the manifold wisdom of God; and shall we, for whom it was offered,—we, sinners of the Gentiles, to whom this word of salvation is sent, neglect the offered mercy? Is it nothing to us that Christ died for our sins and rose again for

our justification, and promises to us the gift of his Holy Spirit to convert and sanctify our hearts? Is it nothing to us, that, notwithstanding all our offences, pardon is offered to us, if only we repent and turn to God; with whom, being justified freely by faith, we obtain peace and an interest in his promises here, and everlasting glory hereafter? Shall we slight this bountiful provision of the grace of God to supply all our wants? Shall we refuse to yield to him our hearts, and to devote to him our lives? No: He deserves, not less than he requires, our obedience; he invites us by gratitude, as much as he commands us by the obligations of his law. Be it then ours, his Holy Spirit assisting us, to understand, to feel the value of, and to embrace for our eternal welfare, this mystery of Divine wisdom, this unspeakable gift of God to man, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

JOB'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND PRAYER.

JOB X. 12—16.

Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction, for it increaseth.

IN these words Job addresses God as his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; and he seems to ask, why, knowing his weakness and frailty, he laid upon him such heavy burdens as those which he was called upon to bear. He appears to have felt some difficulty in reconciling the past mercies of God with his present afflicting dispensations; and he sometimes betrays almost a tone of reproach in his language, as if he had been sought out and punished with more than

the ordinary strictness of God's righteous judgments. Yet, amidst all, he acknowledges that his Creator doubtless had wise, though to him unknown, reasons for his dispensations: "These things," said he, "thou hast hid in thine heart:" they were planned in thine infinitely wise, holy, and beneficent, though unsearchable, counsels —"I know this is with thee:" to me, indeed, it is a source of trouble and perplexity; but to thee it is plain: it was rightly though mysteriously devised; it is equitably though severely executed. And then, as though glancing at the righteousness of God's law, on the one hand, and, on the other, at the sinfulness of mankind generally, and in particular at his own personal transgressions, with a sense of the imperfection of his best obedience, he adds, "If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head: I am full of confusion; therefore see mine affliction, for it increaseth."

This affecting passage sets before us, First, Job's acknowledgment of his infinite obligations to God; Secondly, the judicial relation in which he stood towards Him, and his conscious guilt and confusion at the prospect; Thirdly, his appeal to Him to compassionate his affliction.

I. First, then, we have Job's acknowledgment of his infinite obligations to God: "Thou

hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." This acknowledgment is threefold, comprising the blessings of creation, preservation, and the additional mercies which through the "favour" of God he had been permitted to enjoy.

1. The blessing of creation: "*Thou hast granted me life.*"—Job is supposed to have existed at an early period of the world, and most probably before the time of Moses; yet he was well acquainted with that fundamental doctrine, with which Moses opens the Book of Genesis, that God created the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain.—He does not attribute his existence to chance, or necessity; but speaks of it expressly as a grant from the Almighty; a grant bestowed for the most wise, benevolent, and momentous purposes. Practical atheism is at all times too common, even among many who profess and call themselves Christians. How few, comparatively, are accustomed, like Job, constantly to refer their being to God; and that not merely as an article of their belief, but with a deep impression of what they owe to him; with a practical conviction that they are not their own; and with a due sense of their obligation to live to His glory. They do not, indeed, doubt in theory—for who can for a moment doubt it?—that "it is He that hath made us, and not we

ourselves;" but as concerns those feelings of love and gratitude, of duty and responsibility, which such a belief ought to inspire, they live as widely separated from Him "in whom they live and move and have their being," as though no such relationship existed. Yet it is certain that an habitual feeling of reverence towards God as our Creator, though not the whole of religion, is a necessary and indispensable part of it. The Gospel of Christ, in pointing out to us other truths, essential to be known by us as fallen and guilty creatures, does not overlook, but on the contrary uniformly takes for granted, and displays, this first natural and unalterable bond of union between the Creator and his creatures. The grant of life was the first benefit we were capable of enjoying, and it opened the way to all that followed. Without it, we had been infinitely lower than the very beasts that perish; we could not have shared even the meanest enjoyments of the basest reptile; we had been as the dust on which we tread, without power or consciousness; a mere blank amidst those happy tribes of beings whom the all-wise and benevolent Creator designed to enjoy the blessings of his providence, or the higher delights of his eternal presence.

2. But to the benefit of creation Job adds that of preservation: "*Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.*"—The same Almighty Hand

that formed and animated the human frame, sustains it amidst the perils to which it is every moment exposed. We do not live by chance, any more than we were at first formed by chance. One moment's absence of that Divine visitation which preserves our spirit, would suffice to plunge us back—we know not whither;—all our capacities for happiness, all our hopes for this world, and those brighter expectations which, as Christians, we cherish beyond the grave, would be utterly extinguished. In vain would be all that has hitherto been done for us; in vain a frame fearfully and wonderfully made; in vain the hearing ear, the seeing eye, the expanding intellect, the cheering affections, the glowing heart. But such an abandonment we are assured never has taken or will take place. For, said the Psalmist, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there also: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." This powerful and unceasing visitation of the Creator preserves all things in their appointed rank and order; and to it we are indebted for our continued capacity for partaking of the blessings to which our creation introduced us.

3. To sum up the whole, Job adds the men-

tion of that Divine "*favour*" without which our creation and preservation had been but the commencement and prolongation of misery.—And here how widely might we expatiate! How profusely might we heap together the innumerable blessings which a merciful Creator has showered, like the manna in the Wilderness, around our path! How thickly, how interminably, do his benefits cluster around us! By night and by day, in infancy and in manhood, in childhood and old age, in our personal and social relations, in our families and in the world, in sickness not less than in health, in adversity not less than in prosperity, he pours into our cup blessings infinitely beyond our deservings,—all flowing from the favour which, as a Creator, he bears to his creatures; and which, notwithstanding we have forfeited all claim to it by our sins and provocations, he did not withdraw from us in our hour of deepest necessity, for even when we were sinners Christ died for us. And here opens before us the most wonderful of all proofs of his favour. Here beams upon us the stupendous revelation of the redemption that is in Christ. Here we behold why even the sinner, to whom, as a sinner, no Divine approbation can be exhibited, is yet spared, and crowned with so many benefits, in order that he may turn to the God whom he had forsaken, seek the mercy which he had despised, and be won

by the long-suffering which he had perhaps profanely made a motive for a continuance in his sins. The temporal marks of favour, hitherto chiefly spoken of, are, in the case of the true Christian, but the scanty first-fruits of an eternal harvest; while to the careless and impenitent they are so many proofs that it is not till after the most ample exhibitions of Divine patience that God at length "swears in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest." It may not be clear exactly to what extent Job, and other holy men in the patriarchal times, were made acquainted with the particulars of that highest instance of God's favour to mankind, which under the New-Testament dispensation is fully revealed—namely, the redemption of the world by the death of Christ, and our justification freely by faith in him. There are, however, several references to it in the Book of Job; and in the very chapter before that from which our text is taken, we find him expressing his consciousness of the need of a Mediator between God and man; where he says, "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any day's-man (that is, an umpire or mediator) that might lay his hand upon us both." But, whatever might be the exact degree of spiritual knowledge afforded by early revelations to Job and other patriarchal be-

lievers, we, who live since that blessed period when life and immortality were fully brought to light by the Gospel, cannot but perceive how inestimably great was the favour, that, "in the ages to come, God shewed the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ." Whether we consider the awful magnitude of our guilt, or the costly nature of the sacrifice made to atone for it, or the freeness and amplitude of the pardon bestowed upon us; we shall see that this was indeed the climax of Divine favour; to which our creation and preservation were but preparatory; and the issue of which, to all who humbly avail themselves of the offered mercy, will be an eternity of happiness in the world to come.

Secondly. Having thus traced Job's acknowledgment of his infinite obligations to God, we proceed to consider the judicial relation in which he describes himself as standing towards him, and his conscious guilt and confusion at the prospect. We might have supposed that his expressive description of God's past mercies would have been succeeded by the warmest language of hope and confidence. And thus would it have been, had no obstacle interposed. The angels in heaven, in reviewing the benefits conferred upon them by their beneficent Creator, blend with their emotions of love and gra-

titude no symptoms of apprehension or alarm. They are not "full of confusion," while they survey the mercies of Him who "granted them existence and favour, and whose visitation preserves their spirit." The past manifestations of God's overflowing bounty are to them a pledge for the present, and the present for the future. But not so with man, when duly conscious of the ungrateful return which he has made for the bounties of his Almighty Benefactor. His conduct towards God, he well knows, presents a most condemning contrast to the conduct of God towards himself. For every relationship involves certain duties; and most of all, the relationship of a creature to his Creator. The very bond of this relationship, on the side of man, was perfect love, confidence, and obedience. He had a law given him to obey, and he was bound by every tie to obey it. This law was holy, just, and good: it was not less for his own benefit, than for the glory of his Creator: and its sanctions were the approbation or the displeasure of God, and consequent happiness or misery, both here and hereafter. A creature, if guiltless, would not tremble for the consequences of his own conduct under such a law; but what are the actual circumstances of man? Job seems to exhibit them, in the text, under a three-fold view—supposing, first, a case which may be considered as the ordinary

average of human character, "If I sin:" next, a case of peculiar atrocity, "If I be wicked:" thirdly, a case of unusual moral rectitude, "If I be righteous"—and in all these he shews the condition in which we stand before God.

1. "*If I sin, thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.*"—No extraordinary degree of profligacy seems to be here supposed; nothing more is stated than what we all acknowledge to be applicable to ourselves; for who is he that sinneth not? Yet how stands our condition under this aspect? First we learn, that God "marks us:" his omniscient eye is upon all our ways: our iniquities, many of which we may think venial, he notes down in the book of his remembrance; there they stand awfully recorded; and that not as an idle memorial; but for the express purpose of his visiting them with a corresponding punishment: "Thou wilt not acquit me." How fearful the condition of a creature thus exposed by his own sinful conduct to the just wrath of his Creator! Well might Job exclaim, "I am full of confusion." For who shall stand before God when he is displeased? who shall stay his hand when it is stretched out to inflict punishment?

2. "*If I be wicked, woe unto me.*"—The degree of guilt marked by this expression seems to be more flagrant than that implied in the former; it appears to point out, not the general average,

appalling as it is, of human delinquency, but a high degree of atrocity of conduct; as where he says, in the seventh verse, "Thou knowest I am not wicked." The conclusion in this case is therefore most clear; for if *every* sin is marked, if *no* iniquity is followed by acquittal, then woe indeed to the hardened, the deliberate transgressor! And would that even under this darker shade were not to be found too many who have had ample opportunities for learning the requirements of their Creator, and their own bounden obligation to obey them!

3. "*If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head.*"—Job cannot here refer to perfect and unerring holiness of heart and conduct—for to such a degree of sanctity no human being can lay claim; if he could, he might justly lift up his head;—but he doubtless speaks comparatively, taking man at his best estate; selecting the most moral, the most upright, the most amiable pattern of human virtue; then, in this most favourable case, shewing the utter incompetence of man to stand justified in the sight of his Creator. Put the matter to the test: collect all that is fairest and brightest in our fallen and corrupt nature; and then examine whether no taint of sin or imperfection is found; whether the selected individual has adequately lived up to the law of his creation; whether, with all his virtues, he has loved, honoured,

and served his Creator with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, or has loved his neighbour as himself. So imperfect are our best actions, so mixed are our purest motives, that, far from challenging the rewards of merit, we must acknowledge ourselves, on an impartial survey, to deserve the punishment of our aggravated disobedience. At best we are unprofitable servants; "to us belongeth shame and confusion of face;" and if, instead of abasing ourselves in the very dust before the Divine Majesty, we should proudly lift up our heads in his presence, what should we behold in his hand, but the record of our sins and follies, our ingratitude and disobedience; what in his piercing glance, but the frown of his insulted justice; or hear from his lips, but the sentence of our own irretrievable ruin? The friends of Job thought that he wished to try this experiment; that he justified himself before God; but his affliction had taught him a lesson more suitable to his frail and fallen condition: so that, instead of lifting up his head, his language was, "Whom, though I were righteous, I would not answer; but I would make supplication to my Judge;" or, in the corresponding sentiment of the text, "See thou mine affliction, for it increaseth." And this leads us,

Thirdly, to consider his humble appeal

to God to have compassion upon him. He claims no merit; he proffers no gift. He had acknowledged God's mercies to him; and confessed his inability to stand before his justice. What, then, is his hope of escape? It is in substance the language of the Publican, and of every true penitent in every age, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." His affliction was increasing; nothing but despair lay before him; but in his extremity he applies, where none ever rightly applied in vain, to the infinite Source of mercy and compassion, "See Thou mine affliction." How excellent is the example which he here sets before us! In every exigency of life, or when weighed down with the burden of our sins before God, let us betake ourselves to Him who will compassionate our weakness, assuage our sorrows, and forgive our transgressions. Happy is it for us that he is not a God afar off, but is at all times within reach of our humble petitions; and that he has appointed for us a way of access to his throne, through a Mediator who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let us thus approach him in the language of Job, with fervent acknowledgments of his goodness, and of our own ingratitude; of his infinite justice, and our own unrighteousness; with self-condemnation on the one hand, and a humble trust in his mercy in Christ Jesus on the other;—and then will he

look with pity upon our affliction, then will he pardon all our iniquities. For no sooner had Job practically acquired this just view of himself and of God; no sooner had he said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" than it is added, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job." And thus will he continue to be gracious to every sincere penitent, through the infinite merits of his beloved Son. Only let us not neglect or reject his offered mercy by "ignorance, hardness of heart, or contempt of his word and commandment."

SERMON XIII.

CHANGING OUR GOD.

JER. ii. 11.

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

THE records of all ages exhibit to us the strange obstinacy with which the heathen usually cling to their evil customs and superstitions. If we except the triumphs obtained over Paganism by the Gospel of Christ from the Apostolic age up to the present moment, some of which even in our own day have been most signal and consoling, the idolatrous nations of the world still perpetuate the absurd, and cruel, and unholy practices transmitted to them by their fathers. Human sacrifices, voluntary tortures, ceremonies the most preposterous, opinions the most irrational, are handed down from generation to generation as their best birth-right, their highest privilege. Long and widely must knowledge and civilization extend

their influence before they subvert even the grosser rites of heathenism; nay, we find that the most polished and classical nations of antiquity wandered as far from truth and righteousness in their idolatries, and were as tenacious for their fabled gods, as the most barbarous tribes of savages.

Most urgent then is it upon all who profess themselves to be Christians, to feel pity for their fellow-creatures sunk in the darkness and guilt of heathenism, and to exert themselves to the utmost of their power in their various spheres of life to assist in sending to them the word of God, and Christian teachers, to rescue them from their fearful condition.

But there is also another practical consideration connected with a survey of the obstinate blindness and superstition of the heathen, and their devotion to their idolatrous worship; namely, the contrast which it affords to the conduct of too many who consider themselves worshippers of the one true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Such persons may not indeed have professedly thrown off the Christian faith, or bowed down before lifeless images; for to these particular sins they have no temptation; but, viewing the expostulation in the text in its full meaning and spiritual application, may it not too truly be said, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no

gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." The justness of this application will but too clearly appear if we compare their conduct, as to its real spirit, with that of the Israelites addressed in the words before us; in which the prophet in the first place shews a twofold sin of the people, in *forsaking God*, and *choosing idols*; and in the second, a threefold aggravation of their conduct, in *its sinfulness*, *its ingratitude*, and *its folly*.

First, then, we have set before us the evil conduct of the people; which consisted in two particulars, forsaking the worship of the true God, and joining themselves to idols; as is expressed in most striking imagery in the thirteenth verse: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." God is the author of all blessings, both for the body and the soul; and whatever else men prefer before him, be it, as in the case of the Israelites, the idols of the heathen, or, as in the case of too many who call themselves Christians, the sins and vanities of the present life, or the uncertain possession of mere worldly blessings, they are guilty of the twofold sin here described.

1. The first step in the career of evil, is "forsaking God." This is the fountain and

root of all other sins. If men lived as always in his presence, seeking to do his will, and placing their highest enjoyment in his favour, they would be preserved by his grace and protection, as with an impenetrable shield, from the power of sin and temptation. While the prodigal son remained contented and dutiful under his parent's roof, he knew nothing of the want, the poverty, the hunger, which he afterwards experienced, and the keen feeling of which convinced him of his folly in forsaking the duties and comforts of his paternal mansion. His first sin, and that which led to all the evils which overtook him, was his neglect towards his parent, his indifference to his approbation, his carelessness as to incurring his displeasure, his wish to cast off the duties he owed to him, and to live in utter selfishness and independence of paternal restraint. If then we would guard against evil, if we would not expose our immortal souls to certain ruin, we must watch over our hearts, and beware of forsaking God. The more gross and open violations of his law, are readily discovered, and they are apt to startle us by their enormity; while perhaps we think little or nothing of that great sin which is the foundation of all others. Yet who is there that has not been guilty of this sin? who is there that can say, that he has not neglected the service of God; refused him the tribute of

his affections, been indifferent to his glory, and disobeyed his commands? "I know you," said our Saviour to the Jews, "that ye have not the love of God in you;" and this still continues to be the great offence of all mankind.

2. But this sin leads to another; for we are not content, when we forsake God, that our hearts should continue a mere blank; we seek to fill up the void which his absence has made, and to find our satisfaction in other objects, which can never afford us true repose. Having forsaken God, we choose to ourselves idols; for, in the language of Scripture, every thing is an idol which usurps, in our affections, the throne due to our Creator alone. Whether we place our chief delight in the desires of the flesh, that is, in sensual indulgences; or in the desire of the eye, that is, in a thirst for riches and temporal possessions; or in the pride of life, that is, in ambition, vain-glory, and the love of human applause, we commit the sin of spiritual idolatry: we break the first and great command, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me;" we prove that we do not love God "with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength;" and we incur the just displeasure of Him who has declared, "I will not give my glory to another." Thus are all mankind proved to be guilty before God. In the words of the Almighty in the chapter before us, "they are

gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and become vain;" they even refuse his offers of peace and reconciliation; they reject his promises of grace and mercy, they despise the sacrifice which he has provided for their sins; they will not come unto Christ that they may live; they grieve his Holy Spirit; they are not willing to be born again and sanctified, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus: in a word, content with the world, satisfied for a time with the broken cisterns which they have substituted for the fountain of living waters, they choose their portion in this life, and overlook the concerns of the life to come.

Secondly. Such is the universal offence of mankind against God: we proceed now to shew *the sinfulness*, *the ingratitude*, and *the folly*, which are involved in it, all of which are distinctly pointed out by the prophet in his solemn expostulation with the people of Israel and Judah.

1. *Its extreme sinfulness.*—Persons are apt to speak and to think of these subjects with the most careless indifference: they admit indeed that they are not so good as they ought to be, or hope to be; they own that they have too often failed in their duty to God; they do not profess to be perfect, and they trust that God will forgive them for the sake of Jesus Christ; but beyond this customary acknowledgment

they proceed not a single step in the path of humility and sincere repentance. They do not consider themselves as virtually addressed in such words as those in the chapter which precedes our text, where Jehovah says by his prophet, "I will utter my judgments against them, touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods." Except perhaps as respects a few special transgressions, their conscience is little burdened with a sense of the enormity of their offences against the Most High. They do not open their eyes to the aggravation of their crime, as pointed out even by our natural sense of obligation to our Creator, of which the very heathen are examples; for, says the Almighty, "hath any nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?" The light of natural reason taught them that they ought to obey their Creator, their Preserver, and their Benefactor, though their ignorance, their superstition, and their vain imaginations had profanely changed his glory, "the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

But the proof of our sinfulness in forsaking God, and in placing our trust and happiness in the things of this present life, does not depend upon the mere light of natural conscience; for

we have in our possession a revelation from himself, in which he plainly declares to us his own unerring decision upon the subject. When he chose the people of Israel to be peculiarly under his protection, he made with them this solemn stipulation: "Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice; and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him." The same obligation applies to all mankind; and we are told throughout Scripture, that "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." When the Jews had neglected to obey the laws of God given to them in his word, it was said, "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according to all which is written concerning us." And so great was the sinfulness of such conduct, that, in the verse which follows the text, the heavens are called upon to be "astonished and horribly afraid," that a feeble and sinful creature should thus set himself as it were in systematic opposition to the will and the commands of his Creator.

2. But the sinfulness of forsaking God, and preferring other things to his service, is greatly aggravated by the *ingratitude* involved in the offence. The chapter before us contains the most affecting expostulations on this subject.

The Almighty reminds his rebellious people of the miracles of mercy which he had performed in their behalf; how he had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt; and "I brought you," he continues, "into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof." He gave them his law to guide them, and pastors to teach them; and he challenges them as it were to point out any instance in which he had acted unjustly or unkindly towards them: "what iniquity have your fathers found in me?" And does not this representation exhibit to us the tender mercies of God towards ourselves? Has he not given us existence, and food, and clothing, and all the endearments and blessings of life? has he not preserved us amidst all the dangers temporal and spiritual to which we were exposed; has he not bestowed upon us an understanding capable of knowing him, and a soul capable of enjoying his presence for ever in heaven? Above all, has he not given his Son to die for us? and if we avail ourselves of his mercy, and place our faith in that sacrifice for our sins, will he not with him also freely give us all things? Have we found him a hard master? Did he ever com-

mand any thing injurious to our happiness? Is not his service perfect freedom; his love our highest privilege and reward? How great then the ingratitude of forsaking so good and merciful a Creator; of denying him our affections; of preferring to him the most senseless trifles; of offending him by our neglect or disobedience to his laws!

3. But there is still another consideration dwelt upon by the prophet, in reference to this sinful and ungrateful course of conduct; namely, its unparalleled *folly*. The very heathen had not changed their gods, though they were no gods; they would not give up their vain hope of benefit from the supposed protection of their images of wood and stone; yet the professed worshippers of the one living and true God are too often willing to sacrifice the inestimable blessings of his favour, for the most trifling gratifications of a frail and sinful life. "My people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit." The glory of man is the protection and favour of God, and a life of devotion to his holy laws; this, and this alone, is really profitable either to the body or the soul; for godliness only hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. To follow the evil example which has been described, is both debasing and injurious: we sacrifice, by so doing, both our true "glory"

and our highest "profit." What earthly honour is of any avail, if the Infinite Source of all glory condemn us at the last day to eternal shame and confusion of face? What profit would it be to us, if we could gain the whole world, and lose our immortal souls? No! it is the height of folly, thus to choose the worldly mammon before the true riches; to forsake God for the creature; and to prefer earth to heaven, and time to eternity.

In conclusion, let us bring this subject home to our own hearts by humble self-examination. Are we not conscious that we have been guilty of the sin of forsaking God? Have we not neglected to cherish a due sense of his presence; to reflect with lively gratitude upon his goodness, especially that highest instance of it in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ his Son, for the pardon of our offences; have we not forsaken him as respects studying his word, keeping his laws, praying to him in our necessities, praising him for his benefits, and living to his glory? Let us further consider the extreme folly, as well as the guilt and ingratitude of so doing. For we are wandering from Him who alone can make us truly happy. We are weak, and we refuse to repair to the infinite source of strength for help and protection. We are sinful and justly exposed to the displeasure of God: yet we slight his invitation to return to

Him for pardon; we reject the salvation freely offered to us by his infinite mercy. Let us be convinced, and may the Holy Spirit convince us, before it be too late, of the greatness of our loss, the aggravation of our guilt, and the awful risk we incur by this sinful and unhappy course. Who but that gracious Being whom we thus ungratefully neglect, can support us in the hour of severe trial, bestow on us a hope full of immortality and glory when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and be our exceeding great reward in the eternal world? All other things may, and must disappoint our hopes; but God can never fail us. If we make him our portion, he will supply whatever is necessary or beneficial for us, for the body and the soul, for time and for eternity. Let then the rich count his favour their most valuable possession; let the poor seek it as that which can infinitely compensate for all their short-lived troubles: let the young return to him in youth; let the aged cleave to him in age; for to all persons, and under all circumstances, to walk humbly with God, and to enjoy his fatherly approbation in Christ Jesus, is the highest honour, the most splendid reward.

SERMON XIV.

DYING IN FAITH.

HEB. XI. 13.

These all died in faith.

THE eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews may be regarded as a grand historical picture, representing "the power of faith in God." The Apostle has introduced a variety of interesting groups, each of which is actively engaged in itself, yet contributes, with admirable skill, to the effect of the whole. *Here* we behold Abel offering unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and Jehovah testifying of his gifts. *There* we see Enoch translated that he should not see death, and arriving at the gates of eternity by a new and mysterious path. In another prominent part of the picture is exhibited the illustrious individual who forms the bond between the antediluvian and the postdiluvian world, moved with fear, and preparing an ark to the saving of his house. A still more striking character is

the father of the faithful, wandering as an outcast from his native land, in obedience to the command, and under the guidance and protection, of Him who had promised that his seed should become as the stars for multitude, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, innumerable. Again, we behold a most affecting group; the faithful Patriarch binding his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, upon the altar of sacrifice, and about to plunge the instrument of death into his bosom. On one side we see the children of five successive generations, combined in distinct yet connected groups: here the faithful Sarah, the parent of the race, forgetting her incredulity, and convinced, by experience, that nothing is too hard for the Lord; and there the long afflicted Isaac and Jacob, about to quit for ever the sorrows of life, and bequeathing with their dying lips—the one to his children, the other to his children's children—the sacred patrimony of a patriarchal benediction. On the other side, we behold the infant Moses, at first floating in his ark of bulrushes, upon the waters of the Nile; and, at length, come to years of discretion, and spurning all the honours of a court, for the cause of his afflicted country, and his country's God; "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming

the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." I will not point you to the numerous other individuals that fill the canvas; either, for instance, to those *active* groups, the Rahabs, the Gideons, the Baraks, the Samsons, the Jephthas, the Davids, the Samuels, and others, who are exhibited as subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, obtaining promises, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, escaping the edge of the sword, waxing valiant in fight, and turning to flight the armies of the aliens:—or to those *passive* groups who are seen supporting trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments; who are represented in attitudes of intense pain, as stoned, as sawn asunder, as slain with the sword, or are seen wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.—Passing by all these, and endeavouring to form a general idea of the whole of this sublime picture, I would ask what is it that gives unity and design to these apparently confused and miscellaneous groups? How is it that the Apostle has contrived so admirably to bring together these numerous individuals, of various climes and colours; the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the young and the old; Abel, from the neighbourhood of Eden; Moses, from the land of Egypt; Abraham, from Ur of the

Chaldees; with numerous other characters from the Holy Land and elsewhere, without offending, if I may so speak, the taste, or distracting the attention? The answer is obvious: incongruous as may appear the various groups and individuals to a superficial observer, there was, to a heaven-taught eye like that of the Apostle, one leading feature common to all; there was something which rendered them all fit parts of one grand picture: all tended to enforce one general idea; for, differ as they might in innumerable other respects, in *this*, at least, they agree—and *this* was precisely what St. Paul intended to point out as the subject of his composition—"They all died in faith."

It is at once a beautiful and a sublime spectacle, thus to behold individuals of all ages and countries, with every diversity that is possible in other respects, united in one point at least by a common bond. The man of faith hails as his friend and brother every one who has gone before him to the land of everlasting joy: his communion is the communion of saints in every age; he recognizes as his companions an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven. He is not that solitary being who glides through life without a friend; for all, in every age and nation, are his friends, his com-

panions, his brethren, who, with him have been adopted into the family of God, and are made partakers of like precious faith. He sympathizes in their afflictions, he profits by their example, he shares their joys, he anticipates their reward. Thrice blessed fraternity! Well might the Psalmist exclaim, "Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord." United equally and indissolubly to him of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth is named, what shall separate them from each other? All "holding the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment, ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," they become one extensive household; and the differences between them, great as they may appear to us, are not greater than the different ages and complexions of children of one common parent.

But it is not their *varieties* with which we are at present concerned; for the text directs us not to the numerous points in which they differ, but to the important one in which they all agree. Their outward conditions in life may be various; the ages at which they are summoned to meet their God, and the circumstances attending their departure, may be not less different than their joy and knowledge and experience in religion, or than the events which

have chequered their previous lives: but amidst this great variety there will be still a most important and essential resemblance: one epitaph may serve them all; for on the same tablet that records the frail memorial of their earthly existence, may be inscribed this general prelude of their future hopes, "THESE ALL DIED IN FAITH."

But lest, enraptured by these lofty themes, we should fondly deceive ourselves by unfounded expectations, it is necessary to view the subject in a different aspect. It has not yet been hinted that, large as is the class to whom such an epitaph would be appropriate, there is still a larger class on whose tombs it would be but a splendid mockery. I say nothing of the man who dies in visible terror and despair, whose last hours are tortured by the agonies of remorse; whose conscience, long stifled, now seizes the moment of corporeal weakness, to avenge her wrongs, and to exclaim, with a voice which could not be heard before, but which now overpowers every other sound, and makes the fear-struck heart re-echo with its awful accents—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Without taking a case so strongly marked, there are many other cases, even among the professed adherents to Christianity, in which the words of the text are very far from applying. Let us select a few specimens.

1. A large class of persons may be sai die *in ignorance*.—They are unconscious of t spiritual malady, and *therefore* feel no nee "the good Physician." This class of chara was almost universal in the heathen world is still prevalent among the inhabitants of professedly Christian lands: it is common eve our own highly enlightened country; for withstanding all the religious information t tered throughout the community, there numerous individuals who approach a de bed with the same ignorance as to their dition, and the same unconsciousness of t guilt and danger, as though they had pa the whole of their lives in a region on wl the light of Revelation has never shone.

2. A second class of persons die *in car ness*.—If they know their danger, they do appear to fear it. They cannot be arouse any thing like active concern for their ete welfare. Tell them of death and futurity heaven and hell, they readily admit the de rations of Scripture upon these topics; but s declarations pass by them without effect. arrow of conviction glances from the slipp rock. They confess that they ought to rep but they delay their repentance; and through life so engrossed with the concern the present state, and so insensible to ev thing beyond them, that not even the

proaching verities of the eternal world can summon them to serious meditation upon their impending doom.

3. A third class of persons die *in obduracy*.—They are not *ignorant*; and they are more than *careless*, for they are deliberately steeled against impression: they brave the terrors which they will not shun, and defy, as it were, their Creator to inflict the threatened vengeance. It is not in this as in the former case, in which the arrows simply glanced from the rock, because it was slippery; for here they recoil, because that rock is hard and impassive, and thus fall blunted and inefficacious to the ground.

4. A fourth class die *in false security*.—They are not *ignorant* of their danger, they are not wholly *careless* respecting it, and they do not venture *obdurately* to brave it; but they deceive themselves with *a false and presumptuous hope*, and die, to use a scriptural expression, "with a lie in their right hand." This class is very numerous, and comprises persons of various sentiments. One man, for example, derives his false security from a high but unfounded idea of his own good works, challenging as it were his Maker to confer upon him the felicities of heaven, in part at least, for the sake of his own supposed merits. His language is, "I die in peace, because I have lived, upon the whole,

such a life as I trust my Creator will be pl
to reward." It is true, he may add "th
Jesus Christ our Lord," or some simila
pression, implying a knowledge of the
Sacrifice for sin; but he will often do th
such a way as evidently to indicate that
withstanding his nominal trust in the Rede
he is, in fact, substantially reposing upo
own deeds for acceptance with his Omnis
Judge. Another man places his equally
and presumptuous security upon a dead ir
rative faith—a faith which, far from hum
him in true penitence, far from depressin
self-confidence, far from leading to holines
consistency of life (for such are the frui
really justifying faith), exalts him in his
esteem, teaching him to despise others, a
build up himself in a rash dependence
promises, which were intended only for
penitent believer, and have no applicatior
case like his.

5. Not such is the death of him who d
faith.—He does not die *in ignorance;* for he
understands his danger by nature, and i
quainted with the Scripture denunciatio
punishment against sin. He does not d
carelessness; for he is most anxious to es
the approaching wrath, and the salvation o
soul has become the great object of his con

He does not die *in obduracy;* for he is humble and contrite, and trembles at God's word. Neither does he die in *false security;* for though he should use the strong language of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God," or triumphantly exclaim with the Apostle, "I am ready to be offered," yet this confidence would be a persuasion very different from the presumptuous hope which we have just considered. But he dies *in faith:* while he sees his danger, he appreciates the remedy; while he renounces himself, he trusts in his Redeemer; while he feels and confesses that he has destroyed his own soul, he remembers, with gratitude and joy, that in God is his help. It is this union of penitential tenderness of conscience on the one hand, and a scriptural knowledge of the nature of God on the other, with a faith, which, though neither palliating his sins, nor building presumptuously on any supposed merits of his own, nor bending the commands of God to suit the infirmities of man, still trusts on the great Sacrifice for pardon and acceptance, that constitutes the safety and the peculiarity of the Christian's dying hour. To die like him in faith, is to die with our spiritual senses fully alive to suitable impressions, yet to be able, in some humble measure at least, to appropriate from those impressions such ones as not merely melt the soul in self-abasing con-

trition, but raise it in peaceful confiden
the Rock of its salvation. In short, to
in faith" is to die depending upon Go
the accomplishment of his own promise
was especially the case with those pe
respecting whom St. Paul was speaking i
words of the text. "They had not *receiv*
promises," remarks the Apostle: "but h
seen them afar off, they were persuaded of
and embraced them." In a similar sta
mind the Christian lays hold of those l
which are set before him in the Gospel.
has nothing human to plead for salvation
he depends upon the promise of God, seal
the blood of Jesus Christ, and ratified b
solemn oath of the Holy Trinity. Such
faith. *In life*, it purified his soul, it work
love, it overcame the world, it was the fr
root of whatever was amiable and of good r
in his conduct;—*in death*, it represses his
it animates his hopes, it elevates his eye t
glories of eternity, and brings down alre
foretaste of them in the present world. D
when, or where, or how he may, departi
faith he departs in peace and safety. His
venly Parent watches over his dying p
and angels wait around to convoy him t
eternal home. Arrived at that blissful v
he shall not enter it a solitary strange
shall meet his predecessors in the same

he shall rejoin his fellow-worshippers; he shall sit down for ever at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, with many with whom he sat down to the communion of the body and blood of Christ upon earth; he shall meet also those sinless beings, who, having kept their first estate, now dwell in unchangeable felicity, in the light of their Creator's presence, and are deeply interested in the welfare and salvation of apostate man;—yea, he shall behold face to face God the Father of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and that ever-blessed Spirit, who once enlightened, and consoled, and sanctified him upon earth. Such is the lot of those who die in faith: they open their eyes in never-ending felicity, beyond the reach of all that might shake their confidence or endanger their safety: they are for ever with Him, *whom having not seen they loved, in whom, though in the present world they saw him not, yet* BELIEVING *they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

SERMON XV.

THE ORIGIN, SINFULNESS, AND PUNISHMENT OF FALSEHOOD.

ACTS V. 3, 4.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

INSINCERITY, in its various forms, is one of the most common sins which are current in the world; but it is one which is highly offensive to God, as well as deeply injurious to society. It is true, that there is much of what is called honour to be found among men, and that gross falsehood is almost every where held up to censure and abhorrence; for this is felt by all to be necessary for the general welfare. Men could not live in society, nor could the ordinary business of life be carried on, if some respect

were not paid to the outward appearance of truth and sincerity. But when we advance one step farther—when we look at the heart—when we reflect upon the secret motives and intentions of mankind, and compare them with the Christian standard of sincerity, how lamentable is the deficiency! How little do we see around us, how small a portion perhaps do we ourselves possess, of that genuine uprightness of heart of which the Scriptures so often speak, and to which such frequent promises are attached. How slow is our progress towards acquiring that complete tenderness of conscience, that singleness and integrity of aim, which become our exalted profession as servants of Him "who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

The affecting account of Ananias and Sapphira, from which the text is taken, conveys to us an impressive lesson—a lesson which we should do well seriously to consider—on *the origin, the sinfulness, and the punishment* of insincerity and falsehood. And while we reflect upon the circumstances of the narrative, let us pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit that this awful example may duly affect our consciences, and that we may be led to cherish in our hearts and lives the genuine fruits of simplicity and godly sincerity.

First, We may learn from the narrative *the origin* of deceit and falsehood.—St. Peter traces these sins to *the temptations of Satan, and the workings of a corrupt heart;* for he says to Ananias, in the third verse, "Why hath *Satan filled* (or emboldened) *thy heart?*" and in the fourth, "Why hast *thou conceived this thing in thine heart?*" Satan is, in an especial manner, the tempter to every species of falsehood: he is styled emphatically "the father of lies." It was he who by artifice gained the ear of Eve, and drew her aside from her obedience to God, daring even to contradict the words and threatenings of Him "who cannot lie." It was he who entered into Judas, and suggested to him to betray his Master with a kiss; thus leading him to add the blackest treachery and insincerity to an unlawful thirst for gain. Nay, he even attempted to obtain a victory over our blessed Lord himself, and employed falsehood and artifice to effect his design. But in vain he assaulted Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" his fiery darts were repelled, and fell blunted to the ground. It is only where the suggestions of Satan are listened to with complacency, that they can produce their intended effect. Our natural depravity assists his devices; and the sin becomes our own, even where Satan is the tempter. Oh then let us be constantly on our guard, both against the

suggestions of our spiritual enemy and the evil dictates of our own corrupt hearts: and let us look to God to bestow upon us an abundant measure of his Holy Spirit, so that, when the enemy cometh in like a flood, he may lift up a standard against him.

The origin, then, of insincerity and falsehood, we have seen traced in the text to the suggestions of Satan and the co-operation of our own evil hearts. And what are the instruments which our spiritual adversary employs to induce us to yield to his suggestions; nay, to co-operate in his designs, and even to anticipate them, and to conceive in our own hearts, as did Ananias, the very sin into which Satan wishes us to fall? These instruments are our corrupt appetites and passions, which, except as they are subdued by the grace of God, are constant incitements to evil. How much, for example, of the insincerity which is in the world arises from *covetousness!* What deceitful transactions do we hear of in the business of life—in our shops, and markets, and exchanges—and all to gain a trifle of this world's goods! How many falsehoods are daily uttered to overrate one commodity, and to undervalue another, according as a sordid interest may dictate! "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, he boasteth." The falsehood of Ananias and Sapphira very probably

arose, in part at least, from this sin; for they seem to have hoped, that if they could have it believed that they had laid the whole produce of their inheritance at the Apostles' feet, they would become entitled to be supported out of the common stock which had been collected for the necessities of the saints.—Again, how much of the falsehood and misrepresentation which are in the world may be traced to the indulgence of the malignant passions; such as envy, jealousy, malice, and revenge, from which spring most of the false and malicious reports which are spread to injure the reputation of our neighbour.—Again, how many falsehoods arise from an unchristian fear of man, and a want of trust in the power and providence of God to overrule even the most unfavourable circumstances to our final benefit, provided we withstand the temptation to extricate ourselves by artifice or falsehood. It was such a fear that made both Abraham and Isaac have recourse to a false representation, when they ought to have placed their faith in God to make a way for their escape. It was such a fear that made the brethren of Joseph send a false message to him, putting words into their father's lips which he never uttered; because "when they saw that their father was dead, they said Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil

which we did unto him."—But perhaps there is no temptation to insincerity more prevalent than vain-glory, and the love of human applause. The history of which our text forms a part furnishes a striking illustration of the evil effects of this undue desire of worldly estimation. We learn from the conclusion of the former chapter, that, under the peculiar circumstances in which the primitive converts to Christianity were then placed, Barnabas and others had sold their lands and houses, and had laid the produce at the feet of the Apostles, for the supply of the poor; and probably with peculiar reference to the wants of those who, for their testimony to the name of Christ, had been driven from their ordinary means of subsistence by their unbelieving masters or persecutors. Among others, Ananias and his wife Sapphira agreed to sell a piece of land, but to keep back a part of the price, while they pretended to bestow the whole. Their hypocrisy and falsehood, though probably connected, as before remarked, with some mercenary views of future gain by the transaction, were doubtless also prompted by a wish to share in the applause which had been bestowed upon those zealous and disinterested converts who had devoted their substance to God, in order to supply the necessities of their brethren. They were evidently actuated by a desire to be seen of men, and not by a principle

of love to the Redeemer, or a wish to minister to the wants of his afflicted servants. Nor was there any excuse which could be made for their insincerity: for, as the Apostle remonstrates with them, the land was in their own power, they were not constrained to sell it; and even after they had sold it, they could have retained the whole or any part of the price, if they would have been content to sacrifice their covetousness or vain-glory. Their sin, therefore, was not one of mere infirmity or sudden temptation; but was deliberately planned and carried into execution, in order to secure some worldly advantage, or to gratify an ostentatious love of praise. And, as before remarked, like all other sins, it had its origin in a corrupt heart —a heart unrenewed by the Spirit of God, and a prey to every evil suggestion of the tempter.

But, secondly, the narrative before us forcibly teaches *the great sinfulness* of deceit and falsehood in the sight of God.—Persons are apt to think it a thing of little account, that they trifle with the obligations of Christian sincerity; that they allow themselves to make false excuses for their sins or faults; and to swerve from strict truth, in order to advance their worldly interests, or to gratify their love of ostentation and human applause. So long at least as their insincerity is not visibly injurious

to others, they are ready to think it cannot be an offence of a very heinous kind. But what is the language of St. Peter in reference to the insincere statement, not amounting perhaps to a direct verbal falsehood, of Ananias? He expressly calls it "lying to the Holy Ghost," and he shews the magnitude of that crime by adverting to the Divine nature of that infinitely holy and all-seeiug Being before whom the offence was committed: "Thou hast not lied unto men, *but unto God.*" He further calls it, in the ninth verse, "tempting the Spirit of the Lord." We must, therefore, not only trace back our sins to the evil motives and corrupt heart from which they spring, but must also remember the all-powerful and gracious Creator against whom they are committed, in order to estimate aright their heinousness. Now, God has in a very emphatic manner forbidden every species of falsehood and insincerity. In the Book of Deuteronomy it is said, "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another;" here deceit and falsehood are forbidden equally with, and in close connexion with, fraud and theft. Again, it is commanded in the Book of Exodus, "Thou shalt not raise a false report;" to which it is added, "Put not thine hand with the wicked, to be an unrighteous witness." Yet how many who would be shocked at bearing false witness against their

neighbour before a public tribunal, think little of the sin of inventing or circulating "a false report," which may be not less injurious to his character, and not less offensive to Him who "seeth the heart;" who "requireth truth in the inward parts;" who has classed "a lying tongue" among those things "which the Lord doth hate;" who has commanded us, as the disciples of Christ, "to put away lying, and to speak every one truth with his neighbour;" who has expressly told us, that "there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly Jerusalem any thing that maketh a lie;" who has classed the lover of falsehood and the maker of it among "those that are without;" and who has taught us, by his servant David, in reply to the question, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, and who shall enter into thy holy hill?" that it is "he who walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and *speaketh the truth from his heart.*" Let us beware then that we deceive not our consciences with false palliations of a sin against which God himself has so strongly and repeatedly marked his displeasure.

We are, thirdly, to consider the *punishment* of falsehood. In the instance immediately under consideration, God was pleased to interfere in a visible and miraculous manner to punish the guilt of lying unto the Holy Ghost. The case

was of a very extraordinary kind; the attempt to deceive was under the hypocritical pretext of more than usual devotion to the cause of Christ; and the welfare of the infant church seemed to require that such an imposition should be speedily detected and exposed. God was therefore pleased to endue the Apostles with miraculous power, both to discover the artifice and to pronounce the sentence of punishment. This sentence he himself instantly executed: Ananias, while the Apostle was speaking, "fell down and gave up the ghost;" as did also the partner of his guilt, upon her approach with the same falsehood, "three hours after." The consequence was, that "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things;" an effect which seems to have been the immediate object which God had in view by this special infliction; in order to strengthen the foundations and purify the visible sanctuary of the rising church, which would doubtless have suffered the most imminent perils had such an instance of covetousness, ostentation, and contempt for his all-searching presence, been suffered to pass unnoticed.

It is true that the Almighty Judge does not usually see it necessary thus visibly and miraculously to interfere for the immediate punish-

ment of sin; and therefore "because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." But how false and unscriptural such a conclusion! The threatenings of God are equally unchangeable, whether inflicted as soon as pronounced, or delayed till the unseen world shall open upon us, and disclose those solemn scenes which, from the blindness of our understandings and the hardness of our hearts, we are too apt to overlook. Nothing can tear from the book of God that awful threatening, that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Let us then learn, from the foregoing considerations, the important duty of Christian sincerity. Let us study to be "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." As respects *our neighbour*, let it be our earnest prayer and constant aim, and that not in greater matters only, but in every detail of life, to be true, and faithful, and conscientious in our words and actions, that we may in this, as in other respects, act worthy of our high vocation, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. As relates to *ourselves*, let us be honest with our own consciences; let us dread nothing so much

as self-deception; as making a fair shew before men while our hearts are not right with God, and while therefore—whatever may be our outward profession—we are exposed to all the woes pronounced against the hypocritical and unfaithful professors of the Gospel. Let us also be sincere *before God;* not dissembling or cloking our sins, but confessing them with penitence and humility, and applying to the blood of a crucified Redeemer for pardon and acceptance. We may perhaps be called upon sometimes to suffer for conscience' sake; to relinquish some seeming worldly advantage, or to encounter some risk or danger in maintaining a high measure of Christian sincerity, and refusing to practise the little artifices and evasions which are current in the world around us: we may feel constrained to confess a fault which would not otherwise have been discovered, or to bear a reproach which we might have prevented by the invention of a convenient falsehood; but let us ever remember, when thus subjected to temptation, that the eye of God "is about our path, and about our bed, and spyeth out all our ways." To him, as to a faithful Creator, let us commit our cause, assured that he can, and in most instances will, bless us even in the things of this world, if we endeavour to make our conduct subservient to

his glory; or that, should he see fit to let us suffer for righteousness' sake, he can abundantly repay us by the manifestations of his love, by shedding abroad in our hearts that peace which passeth all understanding, and eventually by becoming our eternal portion and exceeding great reward. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 JOHN i. 3.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION with God formed the chief happiness of paradise; but this happiness mankind lost by the Fall, thus becoming alienated from God in the spirit of their minds. To restore us to this holy communion has been the object of Divine revelation, under all its dispensations; whether to Adam on his expulsion from paradise, to the Patriarchs after him, to the Israelites by the instrumentality of Moses, or to mankind at large under the Christian dispensation. The enjoyment of this sacred communion—this fellowship with the Father, with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier and Comforter—is a privilege which all are entitled to seek, and all may attain in the way appointed in the Gospel. Without it, religion is but a name, a form, des-

titute of all that constitutes its value. In order then to stir you up to seek this inestimable blessing, I shall endeavour to point out, First, *what is its nature;* and, Secondly, *what are the best means of promoting it.*

First. In considering *the nature* of communion with God, I would guard you against the error of supposing that it means any thing superstitious or enthusiastic. It does not of necessity imply a high degree of delight, amounting to rapture, like that which St. Paul, for example, felt when, owing to the abundance of the revelation, he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. There may be as real communion with God in the hour of sorrow and depression, as in the time of the greatest spiritual enjoyment. Every true Christian, however weak his faith, or feeble his hopes, is living in a state of holy fellowship with God. His joys and afflictions may fluctuate: like the devout Psalmist, he may not at all times walk in the light of God's countenance; or, like the disciples, not be always upon the mount of transfiguration; but this is no proof that his communion with his Father in heaven is cut off. The divine relation which binds him to his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, remains firm, even when, in his moments of deep humility and self-abasement, he least enjoys that

peace and satisfaction of mind which such a privilege is calculated to inspire. In considering, therefore, the nature of the fellowship mentioned in the text, we shall view it rather as the Christian's general privilege or habit of mind, than as connected with particular seasons of elevated enjoyment; as the happy state of abiding spiritual mindedness to which he is introduced in consequence of his change of character and his union with his Saviour, rather than as affected by the changes of those uncertain feelings which are no test of the actual state of the heart before God.

1. Now the fellowship spoken of in the text supposes, in the first place, a *scriptural knowledge of the Divine character*.—He that cometh to God must know that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. The way of access to him must also be known; namely, through the blood of a crucified Saviour, the only Mediator between God and man. Some contemplative heathen philosophers boasted of their devout meditations on the Deity, and of the communion they held with him, through the medium of his works, which no doubt loudly proclaim his presence and perfections. But the sacred communion which Christianity opens to us, extends much further: we are not merely admitted to an admiring contemplation of the works of creation, so as to raise in us a general

veneration for their great Author; but we are expressly called to "the fellowship of Jesus Christ his Son, our Lord." It is not enough to know God as a Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Our lost and alienated condition requires that we should know him also as revealed in the Bible; as a God of inflexible justice, of eyes too pure to behold iniquity, and true to his threatenings as well as to his promises; but at the same time a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, to all who truly turn unto him; a God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,—a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, willing to receive the returning penitent through Christ Jesus, to sanctify him by his Holy Spirit, and to make him an inheritor of his kingdom in eternal glory.

2. Communion with God further supposes *reconciliation*.—We must not only understand something of his character, and of the relation which he is mercifully pleased to bear to his people, as a mere matter of doctrine; but there must be also a personal agreement or union with him, the basis of which is a spiritual renewal of our character, in order to qualify us for this Divine intercourse. For "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteous-

ness; and what communion hath light with darkness?" While we remain impenitent and unconverted, there can be no communion with the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and who dwells only with the humble and the contrite who tremble at his word. Indeed, till we are brought into a state of agreement with him, there is no wish on our part to cultivate this Divine fellowship. Rather would we endeavour to conceal ourselves from him, as did Adam after his transgression amidst the trees of the garden. But when, like the prodigal son, we "come to ourselves;" when like him, we begin deeply to lament our guilty estrangement from an infinitely kind and merciful Parent; then our language, like his, will be, "I will arise and go to my Father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Then shall we listen with delight to the message of reconciliation held out in the Gospel: then shall we gladly embrace the proffered mercy of the new covenant; and then shall we come humbly by faith to Christ Jesus, who has procured this reconciliation for us by the blood of his cross. For he is the bond of union between us and the Father; and, being one with him and he with us, we have access through him to the throne of the Majesty on high: we are "no more

strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

3. This fellowship, thus commenced in repentance, faith, and conversion, and founded upon a state of reconciliation and agreement with God, further includes the exercise of *holy love* and *veneration* towards Him.—This is indeed its very essence. In all our prayers, our praises, and our meditations, if we would have real communion with the Father of our spirits, we must approach him with filial duty and affection; ardently loving him because he first loved us. In such a frame of mind, how reverential, yet how delightful, is the fellowship of the Christian with his God! With what fervour does he pour out his soul before him! With what confidence does he look up for a supply of all his wants! With what gratitude does he reflect upon the mercy and truth which have followed him all the days of his life! How consoling are his recollections of the Divine promises made to him in Christ Jesus! What pleasure does he feel in the hope of his heavenly Father's favour! What fortitude does he derive in his arduous contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from the communications of strength and consolation which he receives from above! How confidently does he commit his soul to an all-wise and faithful Creator! How animating are his meditations on the grace of his Redeemer;

his tenderness, his sympathy, his all-sufficient atonement, his promises of protection by the way, and of heavenly glory at the end! And lastly, how endearing is the aspect in which he is led to look up to the Holy Spirit, as the unfailing communicator of peace and consolation, of holiness and stability, and of all that is really good either for the body or the soul! Thus impressed with love and veneration towards his reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, the Christian admires his perfections, delights in the thought of his presence, and finds him ever at hand to listen to his petitions. His language is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee!" "Though heart and flesh should fail, yet God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." He has fellowship with the Father, as the original fountain of every mercy; with the Son as having been partaker of our frail and feeble nature, though without sin,—thus endearing himself to us in his sufferings and temptations, in his death and resurrection, in his victory over the powers of darkness, his triumphant exaltation to heaven, and his eternal session at the right hand of God as our High Priest and Mediator. With the Holy Ghost also he has fellowship in the daily progress of the Christian life, as deriving through Him, from the fulness trea-

sured up in Christ Jesus, whatever is conducive to his conversion, sanctification, consolation, and admission to everlasting glory. This communion with God, founded upon a principle of love to Him, leads also to the communion of saints, and to universal love to mankind for God's sake. For there is a close and inseparable union in the whole Christian family, however much the individuals that compose it may for a time be divided by lesser distinctions upon earth. All are united to one common Head, and all are members of the same mystical body. "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

4. But lastly, the fellowship spoken of in the text includes *imitation*.—The Christian is a "follower of God:" he is "conformed to his image:" he not only calls himself a disciple of Christ, but he has the Spirit of Christ: he copies his example, he treads in his steps, he devotes himself to his service. For communion with God is not merely a devout abstraction of mind; it does not imply a life of idle solitude and contemplation. No: it leads to the practical exercise of every Christian grace and virtue; and to an endeavour to transcribe all that is imitable in the Divine perfections in our whole character and conduct. Is God, for example, a being of perfect truth? The man

who holds communion with him will endeavour also to be sincere and without guile. Is God perfectly holy? The Christian will seek to be holy also. Is God all-wise? The Christian will be anxious for that wisdom which cometh from above, the wisdom which descends from the Father of lights. Is God a being of infinite love? Does he delight in diffusing happiness? The Christian, in addition to his return of gratitude to God, will be willing to spend and be spent to promote the interests, especially the spiritual interests, of mankind; he will think lightly of his personal sacrifices of ease or inclination to benefit the souls or bodies of his fellow-creatures; and, like his Divine Master, he will, as far as lies in his power and is compatible with his station in life, "go about doing good." In these his acts of kindness and charity he will further seek to resemble his Saviour by his lowliness and humility. He will be gentle and forgiving; and the same mind will be in him which was also in Christ Jesus. Especially will his communion with God lead to an imitation of that resplendent part of the Divine character, a hatred of all sin. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The Apostle instructs us, that those who are "followers of God, as dear children," have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." And

here, as throughout the whole subject, we have a practical test by which to ascertain our real character; for if a man should profess to enjoy the raptures of an angel, and did not evince in his life something of the fruits of an imitation of his Saviour, so that men might take knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus, his profession would be but vain, and his pretended communion with God nothing more than hypocrisy or the workings of an overheated imagination.

Secondly. But it is time that we should inquire, in the next place, into *the best means of promoting this fellowship.*—While we remain upon earth, there will always be much to separate between the Christian and his God: even at his best estate, he can see only through a glass darkly, and not, as in heaven, face to face. He will therefore always need every possible assistance to keep up this Divine intercourse. Time will not allow at present of dwelling at large on the various helps which God has given us for maintaining communion with him; but I shall briefly mention a few of the principal ones, leaving each of you to follow up these short suggestions in your private meditations, and to endeavour to bring them into daily practice.

In the first place, then, begin with seeing that you possess that which is the foundation

of all true communion with God—a renewed heart. Till you are brought into a state of agreement with your offended Creator, there can, as we have seen, be no fellowship. Make then your calling and election sure: turn by repentance to Him: rest by faith on the atonement of your crucified Saviour, and pray for the renewing and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit. Thus founded on a right basis, make diligent use of the assistances which God has provided for preserving communion with himself. Endeavour to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Study his word; for this is the record of his will,—the medium by which, as it were, he converses with you, and tells you how you may walk and please God. His intercourse with you will not be by means of any new or special revelation, but by the disclosures already made in his word, as they may be applicable to your case. Cultivate diligent habits of secret prayer; for it is by prayer that you address God, as God addresses you through his written word. And, in addition to the regular exercise of private devotion and public worship, be frequent in those silent ejaculations of the heart, which may be offered up at all times and in all places, whenever a difficulty or danger, a mercy or an affliction, a temptation or a deliverance arises to prompt

them. Strive further to keep in mind the constant presence of God; and this not only in your fixed seasons of prayer and serious meditation, but amidst the daily business of life. This will greatly assist in stopping up the avenues to temptation, and in checking a careless, irreligious, and worldly spirit, which is highly detrimental to communion with God. As far as you have opportunity, avail yourselves of moments of religious retirement, for the purpose of self-examination, and the cultivation of spiritual affections; and even when you are in the world, and are exposed, in the lawful discharge of your duties in life, to the dangers arising from worldly society, endeavour to be "in the world as not of the world," having your heart and your conversation in heaven. Strive in all things to keep a good conscience, both towards God and towards man. Beware of the first approaches of sin; set a watch over your spirit; be ever on your guard against evil tempers, and endeavour to turn all the occurrences of life to the purposes of spiritual edification. Let the glory of God, the welfare of your own soul, and the good of your fellow-creatures, be near your heart; and be ever on the watch for opportunities of promoting them. Seek to grow in penitence, in faith, in humility, in resignation, in disinterestedness, and in the discharge of every active duty of your exalted

vocation as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Thus will your character become assimilated to his; thus will he manifest himself to you as he doth not unto the world, who know him not, and have no desire to live to his glory; and thus, above all, will you be gradually prepared, by the sanctifying grace of his Holy Spirit, for the enjoyment of that better world where your communion with God, now so broken and imperfect, shall be for ever complete and uninterrupted.

SERMON XVII.

GOD'S SPEAKING TO MAN.

JOB XXXiii. 14.

God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.

HOW astonishing are such declarations as this! In human affairs men generally expect the offending party to make the first overtures of peace; and they often think it not much, where the offence has been great, if the injured person shews some degree of reluctance in listening to the offers of accommodation. But in our intercourse with the Almighty, it would seem as though this expectation were reversed. Man the offender remains impenitent, while God condescends to make offers of peace; the Judge as it were supplicates, and the guilty prisoner continues obstinate; the Sovereign proposes reconciliation to the convicted and powerless rebel, while the latter, convicted and powerless as he is, refuses to return to his allegiance, and to be received under the favour and

protection of his gracious Prince. A large part of the Bible seems written to convince us, that if we perish, it is wholly in consequence of our own sin and folly; that God waiteth to be gracious; that he willeth not the death of a sinner; that so far from taking advantage, as it were, of the first occasion for inflicting punishment, he reprieves, invites, remonstrates, and holds out the free offers of mercy to the last. Though he is a Judge strong and powerful, he is provoked every day. Though his wisdom could in one moment confound our folly, and his strength triumph over our weakness, yet, like that heavenly charity which springs from himself, he "suffereth long and is kind." He pities our ignorance; he bears with our waywardness; he deigns even to conciliate our affections; and it is not till after innumerable provocations, that he at length "swears in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest." How nearly any of us may have approached the period in which this tremendous declaration shall go forth can be known only to the Almighty himself: two points, however, are perfectly clear.—The one is, that each new instance of rebellion and ingratitude is hastening on that awful period, and may prove, when we least expect it, the filling up of the measure of our iniquities. The pardon now offered may not be offered again; the grace now despised may be finally withdrawn;

the Saviour who now extends the arms of his mercy to receive all who flee to Him for refuge may soon pronounce that dreadful sentence,— "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." The other equally clear point is, that, so long as the heart is tender and there is really a wish and endeavour to return to God, God is willing to turn to us. Though when God spoke once, yea twice, we disregarded it; yet if even *now* we desire at length to obey his voice, we need not despair of his mercy. His compassion is not gone for ever; the way of reconciliation is still open; the blood of the Saviour is still available for our pardon; and his Holy Spirit is promised to give us a new heart and to renew a right spirit within us.

To impress this subject more fully on our minds, we shall consider,

First, Some of the ways in which God speaks to men;

Secondly, The intention of his speaking; and,

Thirdly, The reception usually given to his declarations.

First, we are to inquire into some of the ways

in which God speaks to men.—In the early ages, before the sacred Scriptures were completed, the Almighty was often pleased to reveal his will by extraordinary methods, and among others by those mentioned by Elihu, in the words which follow the text: "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men." But since the completion of his revealed word, the only sure declaration of his will which we need, or ought to wish for or expect, is contained in that infallible record. "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son." We are not to look to impressions on our fancies, either waking or sleeping, to learn the will of God; but to what he himself has disclosed in his word. Are we living in our sins? He plainly declares, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Are we humbled under a sense of our transgressions, and desirous of forsaking them? His voice is, "Whoso repenteth and forsaketh shall find mercy." Are we inquiring the way of pardon and salvation? His answer to our inquiry is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" "He hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Do we wish to know what he

commands? Every part of his holy word teaches us our duties to himself and to our fellow-creatures, and abounds with gracious promises of Divine assistance to enable us to perform them. In short, there is nothing necessary for us to know for our spiritual and eternal welfare which is not therein clearly revealed.

The truths thus disclosed in God's word are impressed upon us by many assistant means. The voice of creation is the voice of God, telling us of his wisdom, and power, and goodness. The ministers of Christ also are his voice, repeating his declarations to a thoughtless world; as says Elihu, in the sixth verse, "I am, according to thy wish, in God's stead;" and again, in the twenty-third, "A messenger, an interpreter, to shew unto man His uprightness." And particularly are the events of Divine Providence, whether prosperous or afflicting, his voice. The chapter before us shews how the Almighty thus "opens the ears of men and sealeth their instruction." Sometimes he speaks by pain and sickness; warning the sufferer to humble himself under the mighty hand of God; to be afflicted for his past sins; and to turn in his affliction to his long forsaken Creator. At others, by a merciful restoration to strength and comfort; the flesh of the sufferer "becomes fresher than a child's: he returns to the days of his youth," being thus invited by the en-

dearing voice of love and gratitude to "acquaint himself with God and be at peace." Again, the Almighty speaks in the still small whispers of conscience, or the more terrible accents of terror and remorse. "A dreadful sound is in the ears of the wicked:" he cannot escape from the murmurs of conscious guilt; from the dread of sickness and old age; from the terrors of death, of judgment, and of eternity. God speaks also in his promises of pardon, and his invitations of mercy. His voice is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This leads us to consider,

Secondly, The intention of God's speaking.—This intention we have already in part seen in the foregoing remarks. The great object of the Almighty in his communications to a guilty world is to shew us our sin and danger; to point out the way of pardon and reconciliation; to urge us to accept his gracious offers of mercy; and to return to him in newness and holiness of life. His language is, as it were, Sinner, thou art mortal! thou art perishing! prepare to meet thy God! the Judge standeth at the door! Awake, thou that sleepest, and

arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.—But not to dwell upon all the points contained in these merciful disclosures, I shall allude only to three, which are particularly mentioned in the chapter from which the text is taken.

Now one intention of the Almighty in speaking once, yea twice, that is, repeatedly and earnestly, it is said is "*to withdraw man from his purpose.*" The purposes of the unrenewed mind are sinful. The general purpose of men is to live as happily as they can without God in the world; to indulge in the pleasures of sin, more or less gross or refined, for the short season of life; and as long as possible to put far off all thoughts of eternity and all preparation for it. The voice of God, especially in pain and sickness, to which the chapter particularly refers, is to withdraw us from this evil purpose; to impress us with serious thought; to humble us in contrition; to lead us to the Saviour; and to produce in us a holy desire and resolution, by God's grace, to live no longer to ourselves or to the world, but to the praise and glory of our Creator and Redeemer. When, in any case of temptation or evil inclination, a friend or minister, or our own conscience, or the word of God, warns us of our sin and danger, this is as truly the voice of the Almighty, urging us to withdraw from our evil purpose,

as when he spake with a warning voice to Abimelech or Laban the Syrian in a dream, or to the Prophets by express visions and revelations.

Another intention of God's speaking, especially in the voice of pain and affliction, is "to withdraw pride from man." How many ways does he graciously employ to repress that haughtiness of spirit by which men scorn to submit their purposes and actions to his authority, and follow their own inclinations in contempt of his word and commandment! Happy are they who are led to listen to this humbling voice; who are delivered from a self-righteous spirit; and are brought humbly to the foot of their Saviour's cross, denying themselves, crucifying their flesh with its affections and lusts, and copying in their lives his holy example.

And thirdly, the intention of these gracious interpositions of God, on behalf of man, as repeatedly mentioned in the chapter before us, is "to keep his soul from the pit." Not only does the Almighty literally restore many a one who like Job was at the point to die; but spiritually also "He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." "He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy; for he will

render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul going into the pit; and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man."

Such then are the merciful intentions of our heavenly Parent in his remonstrances with his rebellious children. We are now to inquire,

Thirdly, How they are regarded; what reception is usually given to his declarations. "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not."—Strange inattention, or stranger obstinacy! We might have thought it impossible men could be indifferent when their Creator speaks. *He* speaks who has power to punish; *he* who has power to reward; he who can open the gates of heaven, or cast both soul and body into hell. And he addresses whom?—not a superior or an equal, but his erring and guilty creatures. He addresses them in the language of warning and of invitation; of judgment and of mercy; he speaks sometimes as a father pitying his children; sometimes as a judge infinitely equitable, yet infinitely merciful, and not willing that any should perish. Yet amidst all, "man perceiveth it not." The love of sin blinds his eyes, and shuts his ears, and hardens

s heart: "he will not listen to the voice of e charmer, charm he never so wisely."

But though such is the case in too many stances, happily it is not so in all. There are ose who, like Lydia "whose heart the Lord ened," are led to "attend unto the things hich are spoken;" "diligently hearkening the voice of the Lord their God, to do that hich is right in his sight, and to give ear to his mmandments, and to keep all his statutes.") such are his promises made. His voice all be their guide through every intricate path life: it shall cheer them in trouble and in ath; and it shall greet them in the world to me with that welcome sound, "Well done, od and faithful servant: enter thou into the y of thy Lord."

But, oh! how terrible the end of those who spise his warnings and invitations! Soon the ne must come when they can no longer be af to his voice. If the still accents of mercy e too gentle to move their hearts, there are ore appalling sounds in reserve. Conscience s a voice that will be heard in the hour of kness and solitude. Death has a voice that ill utter mournful presages of everlasting woe. nd then, when all the sounds of this dizzy life e for ever over, will be heard in the awful illness of the judgment hour that appalling ice, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels." Yes—even He whose mercy is over all his works; He who now calls upon us, once, yea twice, and without intermission, in the accents of infinite mercy and compassion, to repent and turn to the Saviour and live; whose constant language is, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel!" will then, as a just and inflexible Judge, pronounce and carry into execution that irrevocable sentence. Let us then "seek the Lord while he may be found;" let us "call upon him while he is near! let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

SERMON XVIII.

THE HEAVENLY INHABITANTS.

REV. vii. 14—17.

And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

OUR church, among her festivals, has devoted one to the contemplation of the holy angels, and another to the commemoration of the spirits of the just made perfect. Nor are these festivals, when improved as the church intended, vain or useless. The contemplation of the blessed society of angels may lead us to adore

the wisdom, the power, and the love of their, and our, Creator; to bless him for rendering them "ministering spirits," sent forth by him, "to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;" and also to imitate their example, endeavouring to love him, to worship him, and to do his will upon earth, as by those holy and happy beings it is done in heaven. The commemoration likewise of the saints in glory, may profitably lead us, in the language of the collect for All-saints'-day, to call to mind that "one communion and fellowship in which God has knit together his elect in the mystical body of his Son Jesus Christ;" to follow the example of those now pure and glorified spirits, as they, when on earth, followed Christ, in order that, with them, "we may come to those unspeakable joys which God hath prepared for them that love him, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And who are these blessed spirits? Whence came they? And what is their occupation? Could the veil be removed between us and the unseen world, that veil which though thin and ready every moment to burst, death only can draw aside, we should behold, in the heavenly temple, as described in the sublime language of the chapter before us, "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed

with white robes, and with palms in their hands;" and should hear them, in blissful anthems, crying with a loud voice, and saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." There should we discover that God is no parsimonious bestower of his bounties; that numbers without number for ever circle his throne, drinking deeply of the immeasurable fulness of enjoyment which he pours forth from himself, the eternal source of all felicity. There, besides those blessed spirits which kept their first estate, we should behold Jew and Gentile, young and old, rich and poor, bond and free; many a once despised outcast, or burdened slave; in short, all who, in every age, and whatever their distinctions among men, were enrolled in the blessed family of God's children; all who, in the emphatic words of the text, "had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Let us view this glorious company in the two-fold aspect in which they are presented in the passage before us; First, as to what they were upon earth; Secondly, as to what they are in heaven.

First, *And what, in the first place, were they upon earth?*—On this part of the subject the

text is very brief. Their varieties of age, colour, and climate, with their whole temporal history, and worldly circumstances, were of no consequence to be known; for these affect not their eternal condition. But the little that is narrated, or implied, is highly important. We may gather from the text, that, differ as they might in other respects, in these they were alike, that they were all once defiled by sin, which needed to be atoned for and cleansed; and that they had all sought and obtained this pardon and purification in the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. They were all likewise, when upon earth, partakers of affliction; but they had now come out of it, and were introduced to a state of happiness beyond the reach of trial or change. Let us reflect a moment on these two facts.

1. We learn that the saints in light were once frail and sinful persons, like ourselves.—They had no natural exemption from the passions of our corrupt nature; no plea of worthiness to offer in the presence of their Creator. Yet, through the death and merits of their Saviour, they obtained pardon; they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And thus their example becomes encouraging to each of us, if, like them, we are striving to walk in newness of life. For,

have we many temptations to struggle with? Do we find numerous difficulties in commencing or continuing a religious course? Have we much to bear, or much to give up? So had they; they trod the same narrow way in which we are called to walk; and they had no assistance that is not equally promised to us. *We* have the same holy doctrines and precepts to direct us; the same promises to animate us; the same spiritual food to sustain us on our journey. The God whom we have offended by our sins still continues as willing to receive every returning penitent as he was in the days of the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs: the fountain for sin and for uncleanness still remains open; the blood of Jesus Christ still cleanses from all iniquity; the Holy Spirit is still promised to all who seek him, and none that come to God through a crucified Saviour shall in any wise be cast out.

2. But the saints now glorified were once also *sufferers* as well as sinners.—They were not exempted from any of the calamities which are incident to human nature; and in many instances they had to sustain more than an ordinary share of them. The sixth chapter of this book speaks of some of them as having been "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." St. Paul also gives an affecting catalogue of many, of whom

the world was not worthy, who had "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, and sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." The other epistles to the different Christian churches allude to similar persecutions. St. John, the writer of this book, speaks of himself as "a brother and companion in tribulation." All his fellow-apostles are related to have sealed their testimony with their blood. And even where there has not been this direct persecution, true believers have still been called upon to suffer affliction. Like other men, they have in every age been liable to pain and sickness, to poverty and bereavement: in addition to which they have had to encounter those trials, inward and outward, which were necessary for the perfecting of their faith; to sacrifice many of their dearest inclinations, perhaps to give up flattering temporal prospects, — certainly to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; to cut off the right hand, to pluck out the right eye, and to take up their cross and to follow their Lord and Master, who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs."

Such was the state of these glorified spirits while on earth; and we, if we would enjoy that blessedness upon which they have now entered,

must arrive at it in the same way in which they did. The world must not be our rest; we must be pilgrims and strangers here; we must be seeking a heavenly country, and must be willing to give up every thing for it. It is "through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God." The smooth downward course of this world will not conduct us thither; it bends the contrary way: we must tread the path of contrition and self-denial; warring with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and contented to bear whatever afflictions our gracious Father may see it necessary should befal us in our preparation for the enjoyments of the heavenly world

Nor is this all. We must also build upon a right foundation. We must seek for salvation only where these now glorified spirits sought and found it: not in any supposed merit of their own, but as penitent sinners confiding wholly in Him who washed them from their sins in his own blood. They felt the burden of their transgressions to be intolerable; not indeed that they were worse men than others, but they had learned to view themselves as described in the sacred oracles, fallen by nature, and sinful by practice, exposed to the just anger of a holy God; and needing the atonement of Christ, as their only hope for pardon. They also knew that "the blood of

Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" they had faith in that blood: by that faith they were justified, and obtained peace with God; by the same faith their hearts were purified: they "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and they walked humbly with their God in newness of life, and in a desire and endeavour to do his will, till the hour of death, when they were admitted into that kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world, into which we now find them entered.

Secondly: *And what, in the second place, are they* NOW? They are no longer subject either to sin or to sorrow; nothing earthly, nothing defiling, remains to distress their now glorified spirits.

1. They are perfectly *holy*. The blood shed upon Mount Calvary to expiate their transgressions, has cleansed them from every vestige of corruption. They are meet for the society of angels; meet for that world where nothing that defileth can enter; meet even to appear before the throne of God, to behold him in his unveiled presence, and to serve him day and night in his temple. What a contrast this to their former condition, when, at their best estate, they were surrounded with innumerable temptations, and felt, even after their regeneration, the infection of sin, and were often fearful lest

after all their past experience of God's goodness, they should one day perish by the hand of their spiritual enemies.

2. They are perfectly *happy*. They are freed from the burden of the flesh, and admitted to the enjoyments of the eternal world. Not only are they arrayed in white robes, the emblem of their spotless purity, but they have palms in their hands, as more than conquerors, through Him that loved them, over sin, and death, and the power of the devil. Their warfare is ended; and they are received to the palace of their King, with acclamations of joy. Here they are eternally employed in singing anthems of praise and adoration; happy in themselves, happy in their beloved occupation, and happy in that blissful company to whom they are introduced; where, presiding over all, and rendering all infinitely blessed, they behold Him, whom, while they were on earth, not having seen, they loved, and in whom, though then they saw him not, yet believing they often, even amidst their severest afflictions, rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They have been changed into his image: they "see him as he is."

The text is well adapted to raise our ideas of this exalted state of enjoyment, by its enumeration of various particulars, corresponding to our feeble apprehensions of repose and felicity.

They have washed their robes, stained with the dust and wounds of their late warfare. They enjoy communion with God, the fountain of all true blessedness; no longer, as on earth, beholding him through a glass darkly, through the veil of divine ordinances, or as shadowed forth in his works of creation, and providence, and grace, but viewing him in the brightness of his immediate glory, and dwelling with him and he with them. Thus admitted with angels and archangels to sensible access to Him in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore, they are occupied in the exalted employment so partially, so feebly, begun upon earth, of worshipping and serving him; not as now amidst many cares and interruptions, often with an enfeebled body and wearied mind, with a heart ill at ease, and with innumerable temptations and impediments, but "day and night," uninterruptedly, eternally, with cherubim and seraphim, who "continually cry Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Thus engaged in an occupation with which they never shall be wearied, and which, after endless ages of praise and adoration, shall, if possible, become more delightful as their spirits approach nearer and nearer to the great Object of their celebration, they are raised above all earthly wants and pains, above every thing that would interfere

with their eternal enjoyment: "they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And now let us seriously ask ourselves, Are we pressing forwards towards this heavenly felicity? Is it our first desire to serve God here, looking forward to the enjoyment of his presence for ever hereafter? Are we conscious of our alienation from all just hope of this blessedness by our own merits on account of our sins? Have we repaired to the Saviour for pardon? And are we making it our great business in life to obey his commands and to live to his glory? If we are proud, or self-righteous, or covetous, or unjust, or unforgiving, or worldly, we are not fit to join this blessed society. We must have a new heart given us by the Spirit of God; we must be prepared by that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. The greatness of the prize should encourage us to fresh ardour in our pursuit of it. It is no trifle that is at stake: if we lose heaven, we lose all. What would it profit us if we could gain the whole world at the risk of our immortal souls? What would be our feelings if, while the heavenly gates are opened to

the innumerable company of whom we have heard, they are shut against us? Let us bring ourselves to the test; let us from this moment make a decided choice; let us forsake every thing that is inconsistent with the hopes of this glorious inheritance, and follow every thing that leads to it. Let us imitate "the patience of the saints," and "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The blessing is freely offered: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come:" it is only our own hardness of heart, and love of the world and sin, that keep us back. Let, then, "him that heareth" say to himself, and to all around him, "Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Amen.

SERMON XIX.

HEROD'S WISH TO SEE CHRIST.

LUKE IX. 9.

And Herod said, John I have beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

THE monarch who asked this question could scarcely have forgotten that mysterious Infant, at whose birth Jerusalem was troubled, and to slay whom his father had put two thousand innocents to death. That Infant had now arrived at years of maturity; he had been from his childhood an extraordinary personage; "his fame was noised abroad;" his doctrines, his virtues, and his miracles attracted general attention. Herod could not then be quite ignorant of his character and claims. Whence then the question in the text?

To answer this it is necessary to recal to mind the circumstances of the history. John the Baptist, having reprehended Herod for his vices, had been beheaded by him at the suit of

a wicked and blood-thirsty woman, whose conduct the Baptist had reproved. Since this event a superstitious report had spread abroad, that John had returned to life, and that Jesus, whose miracles at that time excited great attention, was no other than the person whom Herod had slain. We might have supposed that Herod himself would have seen the folly of such a report; and the text would appear to intimate that he did so: "*John I have beheaded; but who is this?*" But conscious guilt is usually superstitious; so that Herod, notwithstanding he was probably of the sect of the Sadducees, which believed neither resurrection nor spirit, was terrified into a supposition, that the victim of his cruelty had returned to life. It is said, (Matt. xiv. 2), that he exclaimed to his servants, "*This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew themselves in him.*"

But, whatever might be the reasons which induced this wicked monarch to ask the question in the text, his inquiry is one that well becomes us all to propose. For he of whom Herod heard is no private character: the whole human race is interested in the events of his life and death; for this is He whom to know is life eternal, and without an acquaintance with whom we can have no well-founded hope for time or eternity.

Let us then consider, First, Herod's question: and, Secondly, his desire.

First. His question was, "*Who is this?*" How different must have been the answer given to it by the various classes of persons with whom he was surrounded! His heathen courtiers would probably represent our Lord as a Jewish enthusiast, whose claims or pretensions were of no consequence but to his own sect or nation. The Israelitish scribe would represent him as an impostor, who pretended to be the promised Messiah. The hypocritical Pharisee would represent him as "a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." The vain, the careless, and the busy worldling would represent him as a troubler of their spiritual repose, and a preacher of unreasonably severe doctrines.

But how different would be the character given of him by the faithful servants of God, who "were waiting for the consolation of Israel." Their language would have been, "This is He of whom the prophets did speak." This is He who when man fell was promised as the Restorer; this is the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Had some faithful and intrepid disciple of Christ been present when Herod's question was propounded, how interesting would have been his answer! Beginning with the fall of man,

which rendered an atonement necessary; and proceeding through the Old-Testament prophecies; which predicted that such an atonement should be provided, he might have pointed his royal auditor to the object of inquiry, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He might have shewn how Daniel had specified the time, and Isaiah the events, of his life; and might have compared the substance with the shadow, the antitype with the type, in confirmation of his statement. He might have represented the love, the pity, the tenderness of the Redeemer; his zeal for the glory of God, and his unwearied services in the cause of mankind. He might have described—but who can describe?—the sorrows and persecutions which he suffered on our behalf. He might have exhibited his life-giving doctrine, and have shewn its blessed effects on the character and conduct of his disciples. He might have pointed to living instances of the covetous becoming liberal, the unchaste holy, and the irreligious devout, under its influence. He might have dwelt with eloquent ardour upon the eternal benefits which would ensue upon a faithful reception of this Saviour, as our Prophet, Priest, and King. He might have shewn, that by faith in him we become justified, and, being justified, have peace with God. He might have described the

Redeemer in his original dignity and glory, as "equal with the Father as touching his Godhead," though now for a time "inferior to him as touching his manhood." He might have contrasted this his inherent glory with his voluntary humiliation, and his submission to all the innocent infirmities of human nature. And having gone through the stupendous narrative, having displayed the Redeemer in all his mediatorial offices, he might have added, "Such, O king, is He of whom thou hearest these things."

It would not, however, have been possible for the most faithful disciple of Christ at that period, to have detailed *all* that we, who live since the accomplishment of our Lord's great work, have the opportunity and privilege of knowing. The Sun of Righteousness had then run but a part of his eventful course. The "agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, the precious death and burial, the glorious resurrection and ascension" of the Saviour were at that time unaccomplished. The fulfilment of prophecy was incomplete; the last battle with the powers of darkness was not fought, nor had the dying Redeemer then exclaimed, "It is finished!" If, then, the unbelief of Herod was inexcusable, how much more so is ours, who have witnessed the final seal of Divine Truth set to these things! Let us, then, each seriously ask himself, "Who is this of

whom I hear these things?" Is he really, as I profess to believe, the Son of God, who came upon earth to die for the sins of mankind? Is he? And shall I neglect so great salvation? Does he lay the easy yoke of his commands upon me; and shall I refuse to bear it? Did he exhibit perfect love to God, and benevolence to man; and shall I, who take upon me his name and profess to be his disciple, continue cold in my religious and negligent in my social duties? Is he all powerful, and shall I dare to disobey him? Is he all merciful, and shall I neglect to love and serve him? Did he die for my salvation, and shall I not live to his glory? Was he patient, and shall I murmur? Was he forgiving, and shall I be uncharitable? Was He, in a word, my "sacrifice for sin, and my example of godly life;" and shall I slight that sacrifice, and neglect that example; thus "crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame?"

Secondly, Having thus considered Herod's question, we arrive at the second part of our inquiry, namely, his desire: "*He desired to see him.*"—It is impossible to tell exactly what might be the cause of Herod's desire to see Christ. He might wish to ascertain whether it was really John the Baptist raised from the dead; or he might be desirous of getting our Lord into his power. But most probably curi-

osity was his chief motive; which seems to be confirmed by what is said when he saw Christ some time after (Luke xxiii. 8): "*And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*"

Thus it is with too many persons in every age. They have a vain curiosity in religion; they profess a desire to be acquainted with our blessed Lord and his doctrines, while they are not under any practical obedience to his commands. But what will such ineffectual desires profit us before God? Rather will they increase our condemnation; because they shew that we had it in our power to know what our Saviour requires of us, but neglected the means of spiritual instruction.

Many reasons might be given why we should desire to become acquainted with Him of whom Herod heard such things.

If, in the first place, we consider his dignity as the Son of God and the Creator of mankind, he claims our attention. With what eagerness do persons collect to behold a prince, a hero, or an illustrious foreigner! Yet what are all earthly kings and heroes to him, who is "the Sovereign and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!" Shall, then, the Son of God come upon earth, and propound

doctrines which we do not think worth the trouble of attending to; precepts which we take no pains to observe?

Again; the personal character of Christ demands our attention. What benevolence filled that heart! What love and tenderness beamed from that sacred countenance! He was truly *the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely;* and as such infinitely deserves that we should earnestly endeavour to become acquainted with his gracious character.

But the chief reason why we should desire to know Christ, is, that our salvation depends upon this knowledge. It is not a subject of indifference or vain curiosity, or which we may omit to study with impunity. Life and death, good and evil, are set before us. This Saviour offers eternal happiness to those who become truly acquainted with him; and threatens everlasting punishment to those who continue disobedient and impenitent. Do we then think it too much to take the pains to think seriously on religion? Let us remember that dying thus unconcerned, we must for ever suffer the consequences of our indifference. Or are we bold enough to say, that we have determined beforehand not to take up our cross and deny ourselves; that we will act as others act; and that though we are willing to be saved, we are not prepared to give up our passions and evil

pleasures? If such be our state of mind, fearful indeed is our condition. It is against such characters, that God has pronounced that awful threatening, "*Because ye despised my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.*"

A time will arrive when we *must* see Christ. He will appear at the last day to judge both the quick and the dead; to receive the righteous into everlasting happiness, and to condemn the wicked to never-ending punishment. But with what different feelings will his appearance be greeted! To those who have loved him upon earth, who have desired to see him in the means of his appointment; in his word, his works, his providence; in prayer, in meditation, and in the ministry of the Gospel, his second appearing will be a source of inconceivable delight. He will hail such with the cheering welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Come, ye blessed of my Father: inherit the kingdom of heaven prepared for you before the foundation of the world." Such shall "see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off." All the clouds and shadows which concealed him from them in the present world shall be removed: they shall see him "face to face;" they shall be like him; and they

shall enjoy his presence and his favour for evermore.

But let us turn to the awful reverse. There will be no pleasure to the sinner in the appearance of Jesus Christ at the last day. So far from it, he will call on the rocks and mountains to fall on him, to hide him from his presence. Of those who, like Herod, saw Christ upon earth, in whose streets he prophesied, and who gratified an idle curiosity by the sight of his miracles, there will be many found, at the last day, whose knowledge only aggravated their guilt in rejecting him. The case also applies to ourselves. *We* have all the means of grace, and the hopes of glory in our possession; but it is, so to speak, a practical and personal acquaintance with Christ that is necessary to render us true Christians. We all know something of him, as did the Jews among whom he appeared; but is our knowledge of the right kind? Does it influence our heart and conduct? Is it accompanied by the fear of God, and an earnest desire to fulfil his commands? It is very possible to understand the doctrines of the Gospel, and to remember and admire the actions and sayings of its Divine Author, without being really his disciples. Let us then examine our hearts; let us see, whether we repent truly of our sins—whether we have a lively faith in the Redeemer—whether we sted-

fastly purpose to lead a new life, and whether we cultivate that most excellent grace of love or charity towards all mankind. Let us endeavour to acquire a more intimate and endearing knowledge of the Saviour, and a more eager desire to obey his laws and imitate his example. And then, though we cannot behold him, as did Herod, with our bodily eyes, we shall see him "as through a glass darkly," and enjoy his presence in the sacred ordinances of religion upon earth, and at length be translated into his immediate presence, where there is fulness of joy for evermore.

SERMON XX.

THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

LUKE XXIV. 32.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?

THE scene to which these words allude took place on the evening of one of the most memorable days that ever dawned upon our guilty world; a day, the celebration of which has even superseded that day of sacred repose on which God rested from the works of creation, and has given rise to the Christian Sabbath, on which the Lord of life and glory, late an expiring victim on the cross of Calvary, burst the barriers of the tomb, and completed on our behalf his triumph over the powers of darkness and the grave. How many stupendous and affecting incidents were crowded together in the short circuit of that day! With its earliest dawn, we witness an angelic messenger, his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,

dismissed from heaven to roll away the stone that would vainly bind down the rising Saviour of the world. The earthquake announces his presence, and the Roman warrior flees in terror from his glance. Yet to that spot, a spot to the unbelieving full of fearful mystery, but to the faithful disciple the scene of victory and joy, we behold hastening a company of females with spices to embalm the earthly remains of their Redeemer, and to mingle their tears and adorations at his tomb. On that auspicious morn, Mary Magdalene first beheld her risen Saviour; to her companions shortly afterwards was afforded the same glorious manifestation; and next to St. Peter, late so boasting and self-confident, but now bowed down in penitence, overwhelmed with grief, and thirsting to evince his love for the compassionate Redeemer, who had been so deeply "touched with the feeling of his infirmities." The heavenly scene referred to in the text, and followed by the revelation of the Saviour to the assembled body of the disciples, Thomas only being absent, formed a befitting close to the evening of such a day. This scene is briefly described by St. Mark, as follows: "After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country; and they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they

them;" but St. Luke has largely handed down to us several affecting particulars of the interview. Two of the disciples, he informs us, deeply disappointed and dejected at the crucifixion of their beloved Master, were journeying together to a village called Emmaus, engaged in earnest conversation on the afflicting events which they had witnessed. Thus discoursing, the risen Saviour joined their company, and inquired the occasion of their grief. They replied, that the chief priests and rulers had crucified Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, who they trusted should have redeemed Israel; and they related also the intelligence they had received, but did not seem fully to credit, that he was risen from the dead. The Saviour listened to their narration, and then, rebuking their ignorance and unbelief, "began at Moses and all the Prophets, expounding unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." And so interesting, so heavenly, was his discourse, that when he vanished out of their sight, they could not refrain from exclaiming, with mingled admiration and affection, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

This passage expresses, First, a high degree

of religious enjoyment experienced by the two disciples; and, Secondly, the cause of that enjoyment.

First, then, we are told of a high degree of religious enjoyment experienced by the two disciples: "Did not our hearts burn within us?" By too many persons a religious life is accounted a life of gloom and despondency, at war with every generous impulse, every social affection, every expansion of the heart or the understanding. But how different is the description given of it in Scripture! There we see every image of peace and enjoyment, of dignity and beauty, connected with the love and the service of God. There we find religion spoken of as the highest wisdom, and the ways of this wisdom described as ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. The affections, so far from being suppressed, are taught to glow with new delights; they are raised above the short-lived vanities of a false and unsatisfactory world, and are fixed upon things above, at the right hand of God. True religion, as represented in Scripture, is not a circle of unwilling or unmeaning duties, performed from the influence of fear or custom, without the homage of the heart. It is not simply being baptized, or attending public worship; it is not a formal reading of the Scriptures, or the offering up of

a few heartless prayers; it is not a cold assent to a system of doctrines, however scriptural, or the decent homage of a life purified from the grosser vices. No; it ascends far higher: it includes the exercise of devout and elevated affections; it is "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It causes the bosom to glow with love to God and to mankind: it presents to the understanding and to the heart objects which may well excite the most exalted emotions. Christianity speaks not of terrors only: to all who truly embrace it in heart and life, it breathes the language of faith, and hope, and enjoyment; it points out the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered; it exhibits that Divine Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and in whom we have redemption, according to the riches of his grace; it tells us that in him there is no condemnation; it shews how we may become partakers of his salvation, how we may be justified, and obtain peace with God; it promises support and consolation through life, hope and safety in death, and joys unspeakable throughout eternity. It softens the bitterest afflictions, teaching the sufferer to glory even in tribulations. It shews how we, who were once afar off from God by wicked works, may receive adoption into his family, and become partakers of a new and heavenly

nature, the preparative for a world of everlasting felicity. Surely then, if, like the travellers to Emmaus, we are sincere disciples of Jesus Christ, there is ample reason why our hearts should burn within us during the journey of our earthly pilgrimage, and in the prospect of that heavenly rest which awaiteth the people of God.

There is, then, in true religion, a pure and solid joy infinitely preferable to those worldly pleasures which are but "like the crackling of thorns under a pot"—momentary and unsubstantial. This spiritual enjoyment is the fruit of heavenly blessings either in possession or in prospect. It is pure in its origin, and purifying in its effects. It refines and elevates the soul, and inclines the will and affections to a cheerful obedience to God's commandments. It springs from faith in the Saviour and operates in love towards him. It is a joy peculiar to the true disciple of Christ; the joy of sin pardoned, God reconciled, conscience at peace, a heart sanctified by the Holy Ghost, sin and death conquered, and the gates of heaven opened for the final reception of the happy spirit. The sacred writers bear continual testimony to the truth and the value of these spiritual enjoyments. Those holy men were not content to revel in the pleasures of sin for a season; they asked for something infinitely better; they

aspired towards the recompence of an eternal reward: they were not satisfied that their corn or wine or oil should increase; but their prayer was, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;" "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God;" "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee;" "I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness."

And let us not think that true religion has changed its character. No; it remains substantially the same in every period of time. The same blessings which cheered the servants of God under the ancient dispensation, and which warmed the hearts of Cleopas and his fellow-disciple on the day of the resurrection, continue still equally adapted to console and invigorate the faithful follower of Christ in our own age, and will remain so to the end of time. The defect is not in the word or the promises of God; but in our own hearts, which too often continue cold, thoughtless, and worldly, amidst manifestations of Divine grace and mercy, which might well cause them to burn within us with the most intense glow of affectionate and grateful emotion.

But in the highest enjoyments of true religion there is nothing enthusiastic or irrational. The disciples in the text had ample cause for the

elevated feelings which they expressed. Theirs was not the affected joy of the hypocrite, or the unfounded joy of the self-deceiver, or the boastful confidence of the presumptuous, or the thoughtless mirth of the unconcerned and ignorant. They had found a solid basis for their hopes; the word of God had been unfolded to them; their hearts had been opened to receive it; they had learned the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour; they had embraced this salvation; they had enjoyed communion with its Divine Author, and had heard from his own lips the gracious words which he spake. They rejoiced, therefore,—and, oh, how worthy a cause of rejoicing!—in hope of the glory of God. Their expectation, that "this was He who should have redeemed Israel," was fulfilled in a far higher sense than that of a temporal deliverance: they had found that spiritual Deliverer, of whom Moses and the Prophets did write; and their hearts glowed with sacred fervour while he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.

Secondly. These reflections introduce to our notice the second head of instruction to be gathered from the text; namely, *the cause* of that religious enjoyment experienced by the two disciples.—When our Lord first accosted them

he perceived that they were sad; and, as respected worldly and ambitious views, there was nothing in his discourse to remove that sadness. Far from leading them to look for the rewards of a temporal kingdom, or the national deliverance of their country from the foreign yoke that oppressed it, he plainly shewed them that the kingdom of the promised Messiah was not of this world; that, on the contrary, it was necessary for the accomplishment of prophecy, and for the unfolding of the plan of human redemption, that he should suffer the pains, indignities, and cruel death, which had so greatly grieved and perplexed them. Through these he was to enter into his glory; not the worldly glory which the Jews in general, and probably these disciples among others, fondly thought would accompany his earthly career; but that Divine glory which he possessed with the Father before all worlds, and which was now to assume new rays of majesty from the completion of his great work of human redemption.

If then no worldly hopes or prospects were held out to them; if, on the contrary, whatever lingering expectations of this nature might have remained in their minds were utterly banished by this discourse, what was it that caused their sudden transition from sadness to joy? what was it that, in the midst of their grief, caused

their hearts to burn within them? It was *the presence* and *the instructions* of their Saviour: He talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures. Their perplexity had originated partly in their ignorance, and partly in their want of faith, concerning the plan of salvation so plainly foretold in the Old Testament, and now fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; as is shewn by the words in which our Lord addressed them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken." To remove, therefore, this perplexity, he enlightens their spiritual understanding, and increases their faith. They had read the Scriptures, but had not understood them. He eases their anguish by explaining to them the mysteries of Divine Providence, as unfolded in the revealed word of God: he teaches them the doctrine of the atonement through the blood of a crucified Saviour: he expounds all that related to himself: he was the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head; he was to reign spiritually over the house of Jacob for ever and ever, and of his kingdom there was to be no end: in the accomplishment of his great undertaking he was to assume human nature; he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him, and by his stripes we were to be healed;

he was to be numbered with the transgressors; and, having made an expiation for sin, was to rise again, his body not seeing corruption. These things he explained, and their hearts burned within them while he spoke. He comforted them by his presence; and he instructed them by his discourse. The joy they experienced was not vain or superstitious; it sprang from an adequate cause; from a knowledge of the Redeemer, and faith in him; and this knowledge was increased, and this faith was enlivened, by communion with the Divine Author of both: "He talked with them by the way;" he impressed upon their hearts the truths admitted into their understandings; he increased their love, and joy, and gratitude, while he enlightened and convinced their judgment. Their religion was not merely a lively sensation of joy; neither was it merely a cold dictate of the understanding; it was the union of all the powers of the heart and mind; their reason was convinced, and their affections were excited.

And why, let us ask, is it that we who call ourselves disciples of the same Divine Master, do not find our hearts glowing with something of the same holy delight that warmed the bosoms of these devout travellers? It is not that we are destitute of the sacred instructions which they received; for we have in the Old

Testament the very same revelation which they enjoyed, and in the New we have superadded an exposition of the Old dictated by Divine inspiration, and comprising, in all probability, a far more detailed account of what related to Christ, than was unfolded in the course of this single conversation on the evening of the resurrection. Nor is it that we are deprived of the means of spiritual communion with the same Saviour; for "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son;" our Lord's own discourses are recorded for our benefit; and his Holy Spirit is promised to guide us into truth; we can have access to him in prayer and devout meditation, and in the commemorative symbols of his body broken, and his blood shed, for our transgressions. He waits to reveal himself to us spiritually as we journey on the pilgrimage of life; and to fill our hearts with joy and peace in believing. Whence then arises the defect? It is in ourselves. We are not, like these two disciples, making the things that belong to our eternal peace the subject of our earnest inquiry. We are not, like them, eager to receive, and to treasure up the instructions of the Saviour. We are not, like them, anxious to retain his presence: we do not prefer Him to every other guest. Our hearts go after our idols; sin, and self, and the world engross our affections; the concerns of eternity are not

our highest object, the service of God is not our greatest delight. Our religion is cold or superficial; perhaps hypocritical and insincere. Our life is not consistent with our professions: we call ourselves Christians, but are not true followers of Christ. We feel not the burden of our sins to be intolerable; we are not seeking deliverance from their power, or pardon from their guilt. Hence we hear with formal indifference truths which, rightly received, would cause our hearts to glow with thankfulness and admiration. Had the whole of the conversation which has rendered for ever memorable the obscure village of Emmaus been recorded, it would, in such a frame of mind, have appeared utterly uninteresting. Indeed, we have read or heard the substance of this conversation almost times without number, in every part of God's word, and in the discourses of his ministers; but when did themes like these cause our hearts to burn within us? There must be, therefore, a grievous defect in the state of our understanding and affections; and, if so, let us begin honestly to examine into the true cause of our religious indifference. Let us also diligently use the means appointed by God for enlightening the judgment and influencing the heart. Let us read his word: let us humbly pray for the instructions of his Holy Spirit; let us meditate on what we read,

and mix faith and love with our meditations; let us aim to practise what we know, and endeavour daily to increase our knowledge; let us strive to live a life of faith upon the Son of God, trusting in his sacrifice for pardon, following his blessed example, walking in the light of his countenance, and gratefully hoping to be with Him for ever in heaven. Then will our religion be infinitely more than a name or form; then will our hearts often burn within us by the way; and, even in our deepest depressions, we shall have a source of hope and satisfaction which no earthly enjoyments can bestow.

SERMON XXI.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE XV. 24.

This my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.

OUR Lord probably intended the affecting parable of which these words form the conclusion, more immediately to represent either the state of the publicans and pharisees, or of the Jews and the Gentiles. But it applies so forcibly to the whole race of mankind, that we should lose the benefit of much important instruction, if we failed, each one of us, to consider it as relating to ourselves. *We*, like the prodigal son, have sinned against a gracious Parent; we, like him, need forgiveness; and if like him we return to the Parent whom we have forsaken, we shall find, as he did, a merciful reception, and shall be restored to all the privileges which he had forfeited by our disobedience. Of each of us will it then be said, as it was of the returning prodigal, *He was dead*,

and is alive again: he was lost, and is found. Let us, then, with reference to our own spiritual condition, proceed to consider *the prodigal's departure; his distress; his repentance; and his return and reception.*

1. His departure. The prodigal was the younger son of a tender parent; he was surrounded with the comforts of life; he had doubtless been treated with peculiar kindness and affection; so that it was both his duty and his privilege to continue under the care, and to enjoy the society and instruction, of his indulgent parent.

And thus has God acted towards us; thus have we been nurtured from our infancy by his bounty; thus has he made our cup to run over with his mercies, affording us care and protection, and all necessary blessings for this life, with the bright hopes and prospects of life eternal in the world to come. And all he demanded in return, was our obedience and affection; that we should love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and faithfully serve him upon earth, and enjoy his presence and favour for ever in heaven.

But the prodigal became discontented with his father's house. "Give me," said he, "the portion of goods that falleth to me." His father complied with his request; upon which "he gathered all together, and took a journey into

a far country, and wasted his substance with riotous living." Unhappy youth! to quit so bountiful a friend! Ungrateful child, thus to repay so kind a parent! Yet while we censure the prodigal, let us ask ourselves if there is nothing in our own conduct towards God that resembles that which we blame. While enriched with his bounties, how often have we forsaken him, and neglected his commandments! We have acted unwisely, and ungratefully, and wickedly: "we have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water." Our pleasures, our vanities, our corrupt inclinations, have occupied the place in our affections which was due to God; we have loved and served the creature more than the Creator; and, instead of listening to his voice and obeying his precepts, we have, like the prodigal, wandered as far as possible from his controul. We may not have been grossly vicious in our lives; neither, perhaps, was the prodigal son in the early stages of his history; but his first and great crime, and that which led to all the rest, was deserting his father's roof; in order, no doubt, to throw off the restraint of paternal authority. And thus it is with the sinner: having once wandered from Him who had the first claim on his affections, and sought for satisfaction elsewhere than in the paths of

true religion and obedience to God, he resembles this unhappy prodigal, and knows not how soon, like him, he may wanton in all the excesses of riotous living.

2. Such was his departure: let us now behold his consequent *distress*. "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want." True satisfaction can be found only in the ways of God; worldly pleasure is compared by Solomon to the crackling of thorns in the flame: they blaze and sparkle for a moment, but are soon extinguished. It is the invariable tendency of sin to produce misery: "There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked."

And what was the plan which the prodigal proposed to himself, to remedy his distresses? Was it to return to his father, and to confess and forsake his evil ways, that he might find mercy? No: he was still too proud, too thoughtless, or too impenitent for this. He therefore "went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine." Thus any expedient is resorted to by the sinner for comfort, rather than the only one that can really meet his case—a return to the service of God. He needs something to sustain his heart; but it is often long before he can be persuaded to place his happiness where alone true joys are to be found. The prodigal

would gladly have satisfied his hunger with the husks which the swine did eat, because no man gave him any better sustenance. But such food was unfit for the purpose of sustaining human life; and he must shortly have perished, had he not determined upon the only plan which could restore him to his long-lost tranquillity. This plan was to return, as a penitent, to the bosom of his father, and to implore his forgiveness and reconciliation.

3. Thus we are led to consider the prodigal's *repentance*. He had deeply experienced the folly of his conduct; degraded from ease and affluence to a menial station in a foreign land, and overtaken by abject poverty and famine, he began to estimate the greatness of his crime by his punishment. Thus it is that God frequently overrules affliction for our good, and employs the troubles of life to bring us nearer to Himself. In youth, and health, and prosperity, we often try to persuade ourselves that we can live happily without the hopes and supports of Religion, because we do not love its restraints. But when the season of distress arrives, we find how vain is every other comfort, if we have not a reconciled God, a compassionate Saviour, to whom we can resort in our extremity. When nothing else can support us, we begin to discover the value of Him whose mercy is everlasting, whose long-suffering ex-

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say unto him, Father, I have sinned against
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to be called thy son!" Here was genuine repentance. We do not find him dissembling his crime, or striving to cloke it by false excuses. He pleads no worthiness; he does not lay the fault on others; but taking all the guilt to himself, with deep contrition of soul he acknowledges his transgression. Such is the conduct of every true penitent. He dares not dissemble his sins before the face of Almighty God, his heavenly Father, but confesses them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart. Like the repentant prodigal, he grounds all his hope upon the unmerited goodness and mercy of his gracious Parent. He feels that he is no longer worthy to be called his son: he has debased the sacred image in which he was created: he has rendered himself an outcast, and has no claim to the forfeited privileges of his paternal abode. Yet still he resolves to return: this is his only resource; and though, like the publican, he dares not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, yet trusting to the unfailing compassion which he has so often slighted, he smites upon his breast and exclaims, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

This deep self-abasement is one of the most hopeful signs of that repentance which needeth not to be repented of. In proportion as we feel like the prodigal, we have scriptural reason to trust that God will be merciful to us, and

for the sake of his blessed Son, will hear our supplication. It is true, we do not deserve that he should receive us; for our sins have been so great and multiplied, that he might justly cast us off without extending one single offer of pardon. But such is not the character of our heavenly Parent: he is always more ready to hear than we to pray: he waiteth to be gracious; and having given his own Son to die for us, will he not with him freely give us all things? He has provided pardon for our sins, and a supply for all our wants. He is willing to restore us to our forfeited privileges: his encouraging language is, "Turn ye, turn ye: why will ye die?" His Holy Spirit is promised both to give us the will to do so, and to work with us when we have the will. What, then, has he not done to reconcile us to himself? And whose will be the guilt if we still continue impenitent and unmoved?

The returning prodigal acknowledged the blessings he had enjoyed in his father's house. He confesses that he had no excuse for wandering; he could not charge his parent with unkindness; and he consequently felt that his transgression was unmitigated: it extended to the heavens, and was an offence against God. And may we not apply the parallel? For are not the ways of wisdom ways of pleasantness,

and all her paths peace? Is not the yoke of our Redeemer easy, and his burden light? Has religion its restraints? They are but like those which doubtless the prodigal found in his father's house, and which he wished to escape; they are entirely for our benefit; they are intended to check those evil propensities which would ruin our souls, and draw down upon us the just displeasure of our Creator. In forsaking God, therefore, we cannot allege that it is because he is an unjust or unkind master. To serve him is our greatest honour, our highest happiness. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God"—a gift purchased by our Redeemer, and freely bestowed on all his faithful servants—"is eternal life." If, then, we deliberately prefer the service of the world and Satan to that of God, our ignorance of our real happiness and interest is not less conspicuous than our sin and ingratitude.

4. But let us, lastly, view the *return* of the prodigal, and the *reception* which he met with from his Father. No sooner is it said, "I will arise," than it is added, "and he arose." He put his resolution into practice; thus setting us an example not to rest in penitential acknowledgments, unaccompanied with sincerity of heart and a corresponding change of life. *We* also must arise from our natural state of

sin and indifference to God: we must shake off our spiritual sloth, and begin with active step the journey towards eternal life.

We are not informed what were the feelings and reflections of the returning prodigal during his journey homewards. Doubtless, hope and fear by turns prevailed in his bosom. He had grievously sinned against his parent, and he was returning in disgrace and indigence, and had no claim whatever to an indulgent reception. Yet one hope remained; he whom he had offended was still his father: it was under the remembrance of that tender relationship that he said he would arise and return; by that loved and honoured name he determined to address his parent, even while he acknowledged that he was no more worthy to be called his son. And such is *our* encouragement; for our justly offended Creator has seen fit to represent himself under the same endearing relation to every sincere penitent. Thus he said, "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: thou hast chastized me, and I was chastized as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou to me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore I am troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

But, however favourable might have been the hopes of the returning prodigal, they were more than fulfilled by the kind reception which he met with from his father, who, "while he was yet a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Not one word of reproach fell from the lips of the parent; not one word of excuse from those of the son. The former was all mercy, the latter all self-abasement. While the son is uttering his humble confession, "Father! I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," the father is commanding the servants to bring forth the best robe, and to put it on him, and to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and to prepare an entertainment as a token of his joy at the return of his now penitent and obedient child. "This, my son, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

And is not this a forcible comment on the conduct of the Almighty towards his fallen creatures? "He looketh upon men; and if any say I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light." Or as it is said of Manasseh, "who did evil in the sight of the Lord," "when he was in affliction, he

besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication." Indeed, so far does the Almighty extend his compassion, that while we are yet "a great way off," he beholds with complacency our intended return, and gives effect to the holy resolutions which his Spirit enabled us to form. His promise is, "Before they call I will hearken; yea, while they are yet speaking I will hear." And upon our return we are received according to the full meaning of that compassionate assertion of our Lord, that "whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Thus every thing, when rightly viewed, ought to draw us to God; our own guilt and misery, and his offers of pardon and reconciliation, are both strong reasons for imitating the conduct of the returning prodigal. We surely shall not plead that we do not need this while we constantly, in public worship, adopt his humble confession as our own. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." These two effects always follow together: we are both pardoned and cleansed, justified and sanctified. How anxious would the prodigal

son be, after this merciful reception, to love and obey his indulgent parent! Having been forgiven much, he would love much. And shall *we* be less grateful to our Father which is in heaven; to him who has borne with our wanderings so long, and is willing to receive us on our return? No: let it be our constant study and our earnest prayer, to perform his commands, to live to his glory, and to devote ourselves wholly, both body and soul, to that Saviour who so loved us that he gave himself for us, to purify us unto himself, as a peculiar people zealous of good works. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

1 JOHN iii. 8.

He that committeth sin is of the devil.

THE devil is described in Scripture as an evil spirit of great power, subtlety, and malice. He is the god of this world: he rules in the hearts of the wicked, and endeavours by all means to prevent their turning to God that they may live. The Bible warns us to be ever on our guard against his devices. A similar lesson is taught in our baptismal service, in which we promise, God being our helper, to renounce the devil and all his works, as well as the pomps and vanities of the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh. Now, in order to renounce the works of the devil, we should know what they are; and the text gives us this information: "He that committeth sin is of the devil." The devil is the spirit of evil, as God is the Spirit of holiness. There are crimes indeed to which Satan, being a spirit,

is not tempted; but even to these he may tempt us, as he endeavoured to take advantage of our Lord himself, by means of the appetite of hunger, which a spirit could not feel. All mankind are either the children of God, or the children of this evil spirit; and the state of their hearts and affections, and the conduct of their lives, prove to which family they belong. For the fruits of the Holy Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The image of Satan, then, as exhibited in the unregenerate mind of man, is the very contrary to all this: but in order to point it out more fully, I shall mention some of those sins which seem most strongly to mark this awful likeness, particularly what are called spiritual wickednesses, which fall in an especial manner within the province of Satan's dominion.

But before we proceed to this enumeration, it will be necessary to make one remark on the text—namely, that it speaks of a wilful and habitual commission of sin, rather than of those infirmities which remain even in the most consistent Christian. The Apostle John tells us, in this very Epistle, that, "if any man say that he hath no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him." If, then, we are sincerely and earnestly praying and striving against all sin, we are not to conclude that our

efforts are vain, our prayer unheard, and that we are the children of Satan, because we have not yet attained a complete victory over it. There will continue innumerable blemishes, nay, too many blots, in the most exalted character. But God can judge where the heart is truly right with him. We have the consolation of knowing, if such be our case, that we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and a gracious Father, who for his sake will abundantly pardon them. At the same time, sin retains all its wickedness, by whomever committed. In proportion as the Christian falls into it, he loses the image of God, and acquires that of Satan; the evidences of his conversion are obscured; his peace and hope are clouded; and it is not till he has again turned in deep repentance and contrition to his offended God, and sought pardon through the renewed grace of a merciful Saviour, that he has any right to cherish a hope that he is a sincere, however imperfect, follower of Jesus Christ.

First. The first feature of resemblance to Satan which I shall mention consists in *hatred to God, and all that is like God.* This was clearly seen in the first temptation in paradise, by means of which the Divine image in the human race was tarnished, and whatever was "earthly,

sensual, and devilish" was introduced into the world. Some of the ways in which this hatred to God, and whatever is like God, is displayed, are as follow.

1. *In open blasphemy, infidelity, and impiety.*—It is not always, indeed, that the resemblance is thus plainly marked: it often takes less visible shades of likeness; but where it assumes so clear a character, there can be no hesitation in forming a judgment. Blasphemers are spoken of in the Revelations as members of "the synagogue of Satan:" deliberate unbelievers are said to have "their minds blinded by the god of this world;" and thus of grossly impious persons of every kind.

2. But another way in which hatred to God, and all that is like God, betrays itself, is *in a dislike to the character, conduct, and principles of his faithful servants.*—We see this exemplified in the persecution which our Lord himself met with upon earth: we see it in the conduct of the world towards his saints and martyrs, both before and after his coming: we see it in the opposition made in all ages to scriptural doctrines, and a devout self-denying life. Whatever is done to subvert the spiritual kingdom of Christ; to dethrone him in the hearts of individuals; to pervert or ridicule the precepts or doctrines of his word; to throw false colours around what is sinful, or to defame what is holy,

is an instance and a proof of resemblance to the great enemy of God and man.

3. So again, *loving sin for its own sake* is another proof of hatred to God and godliness.—How many persons are there who, like Satan, are pleased at beholding sin in others; who are gratified at witnessing what is wrong, though it brings them neither credit nor profit. How many, like Satan, take delight in wicked speculations which they have no opportunity of putting in practice? Satan cannot be a glutton or a drunkard, yet he doubtless delights to behold these and all other evil works; he listens, we may imagine, with pleasure to profane oaths and exclamations; and is present at all the consultations of the wicked. Do not then those resemble him who adopt a similar line of conduct?

4. Akin to the last mentioned particular is that of *endeavouring to efface religious impressions in others*. This is a peculiar province of the devil; for in the explanation of the Parable of the Sower, in the Gospels, we are told, "Then cometh Satan, the wicked one, and taketh away the seed which was sown in the heart, lest they should believe and be saved." So also, when Elymas the sorcerer "sought to turn away the deputy from the faith," St. Paul said to him, "Thou child of the devil." This feature of likeness is still seen in the world. No sooner

does a person appear anxious respecting his salvation, no sooner does he begin seriously to read the word of God, to pray for the pardon of his sins, and to take up his cross and to follow his Saviour, than one or another is found endeavouring to do away these sacred impressions: to tell the inquirer he is too young to think of religion; or that he has been too good to need it; or that it will make him gloomy and miserable,—for that its doctrines and commands are unnecessarily strict, and that he may be content to live like other men, and leave such matters for the hour of sickness, old age, or death. Thus in various ways do the servants of Satan shew their likeness to their master, by their hatred to God and godliness.

Secondly. *The malignant passions* constitute another striking feature of resemblance to Satan. He is a lover of strife, and the author of contention. The first action recorded of this evil spirit was one either of extreme envy or malice, in plotting and accomplishing the Fall of the human race. Within a short time after, we find him causing jealousies and hatred in the first family of mankind, and leading on the eldest son of Adam to the crime of murder. That Satan was the instigator of this deed of darkness is plain from Scripture; for it is said, that "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew

his brother Abel." The reason why he slew him, was "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Thus we see how closely the malignant passions are united; how soon, for example, envy or resentment, if unrestrained by the checks of conscience and the fear of God, or at least by the dread of temporal punishment, might lead to the most dreadful acts of revenge. Truly, our Lord knew what was in man, when he classed unprovoked anger with murder, and an unchaste look with adultery. Following the Old-Testament history, we find Satan still retaining the same character of a tempter and accuser, and "walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Nor did his power or his evil disposition cease when the Lord of life and glory himself entered into the world. The envy and malice displayed by the Jews towards the Messiah sprang from, or were fomented by, his secret suggestions. Thus Christ himself says, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning," as we have just seen exemplified in the first recorded act of violence and blood.—Again; that most awful deed of ingratitude, rebellion, and perfidy, the betraying of our Divine Lord, was the work of this same evil spirit; for it is said, that "Satan entered into Judas," upon which he "went

immediately out," and began to put in execution his dreadful design. In the closing book of the New Testament, we find a similar character given of him. He was "the accuser of the brethren;" who "came down in great wrath, because he knew that he had but a short time;" and to his dominion and influence are attributed, in the second chapter of that book, the persecution and martyrdom of the saints of Christ. If, therefore, we allow any malignant passion to reign in our hearts; if we wilfully cherish envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness, however slight their degree, or plausible the excuses we may make for their indulgence; too truly must we apply to ourselves the words of our Lord, that we are the children of Satan, whose likeness is in nothing more visible than in sins of this black and debasing character.

Thirdly. There is another class of sins, which, though less discreditable in general estimation than those just mentioned, are yet deeply heinous in the sight of God, are fraught with injury to mankind, and are fatally injurious to the welfare of the immortal soul. This class consists of those sins which spring from *pride*. Pride was the condemnation of the devil; and in all ages of the world, that great enemy of our souls has succeeded in drawing men into this dangerous and seductive snare. In families, in

neighbourhoods, in cities, in empires, and even in the professed church of Christ, what innumerable evils spring from this bitter root! Pride may pass in current estimation for a generous virtue, a noble spirit, a dignified ambition; but in Scripture language it is one of the works of the flesh and the devil: it led the ambitious builders of Babel to attempt erecting a tower up to heaven, "that they might make themselves a name:" it caused Pharaoh to harden his heart against God: it prevented Naaman's receiving his cure through the simple means appointed by Jehovah: it lifted up Uzziah to his destruction: it brought Hezekiah to a bed of pain and sickness, and Haman to an untimely end: it led David to number his people, and thus to bring upon them a devouring pestilence: it expelled Nebuchadnezzar from great Babylon which he had built, to eat grass like the ox: by means of it "cometh contention:" it "bringeth a man low:" for "the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled." No feature of the image of Satan is more opposed to that of God than this; for God, though infinitely wise, powerful, and exalted, is not proud. "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, but with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." And accordingly our Lord pro-

nounces a blessing upon those who resemble their Father in heaven, in this important respect: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Fourthly. Another striking feature of resemblance to the image of Satan, consists in every species of *deceit*. For he is "the father of lies;" and our Lord says of him, "he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." He uttered a falsehood, even in paradise, to Eve; he was "a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets;" and he put it into the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to assert a deliberate falsity to the Holy Ghost. Religious hypocrisy in particular is one species of deceit which characterizes his likeness; for he well knows how to transform himself into an angel of light. He that "feareth the Lord and serveth him," must do it, as Joshua urged upon the people of Israel, "in sincerity and truth;" for "the Lord looketh not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart:" he has pronounced, "Cursed be the deceiver;" and has numbered the "liar" among those "who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Fifthly. Various spiritual sins, such as *presumption* (to which Satan tempted Christ himself), *the denial of the truth of God's holy word*,

and idolatry, are striking features of the image of the devil. The last, indeed, is peculiarly so; for idolatry, in all its forms, is the worship of the spirit of darkness, instead of the living and true God. The heathen live in this respect most plainly within the limits of Satan's visible kingdom; but even too many who call themselves Christians are not far removed from it, and every ungodly man is a member of it by his idolatrous preference of the world and sin to the service of the Most High.

But, not to dwell longer upon the enumeration of those features which constitute the peculiar image of Satan in the corrupt heart of man, let us apply the subject to our own cases. Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Whose image and superscription does our character bear? Are we the children of God, or the slaves of Satan? Let us judge of our true condition by the foregoing test. Are we earnestly endeavouring to mortify the above mentioned, and all other, evil affections opposed to the will of God, and at variance with that moral and spiritual image of our Creator in which our forefather was formed, but which has become defaced by the introduction of sin? We must not think to lay the blame of our unholy tempers or conduct to our spiritual adversary; for though he may suggest what is evil, yet ours is the guilt if we fall into it. He has no en-

couragement to assault us, but what we give him by our own readiness to yield to his suggestions. He is not all-wise or all-powerful, like Him who is on our side, and who, if we look for his divine assistance, as we are privileged to do, will lift up a standard against this our enemy. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us. It is only when we parley with his temptations, when our own corrupt hearts unite in league with his suggestions, when we bare our bosom to his fiery darts, that he is suffered to obtain the victory over us. Let us then oppose the power of Satan by the power of Christ: in the hour of peril, let us look to the Strong for strength: and let us "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

SERMON XXIII.

CHRIST MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION.

1 COR. i. 30.

Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . . sanctification.

THE entire passage from which these words are taken is as follows: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The relation which our blessed Saviour bears to the Christian, in each of these points, is highly important; but it is intended, in the present discourse, to confine our attention chiefly to the third—*He is made unto us sanctification.* The importance of this subject is very great; and it behoves us to guard against the injurious mistakes which men are apt to make respecting it. The doctrine of the necessity of holiness is one which is by no means pleasing to the natural mind. There are many persons who allow the

duty of maintaining an upright and moral character, who still are ignorant of, or are unwilling to admit, the necessity of that renewal of heart, that spirit of vigilance and prayer, that deadness to sin and the world, that sacred communion with God, that zeal for his glory, that active benevolence and charity towards our fellow-creatures, which are implied in the idea of sanctification. Others, perhaps, are not unwilling to receive the promises of the Gospel, to claim its privileges, and to espouse some of its most peculiar doctrines, if only they may be excused that holy warfare, that strict self-denial, that lowliness and integrity of heart, and that active obedience to God, which our Redeemer requires from all his followers. It is easy to profess the Gospel in a manner so careless and indifferent as for it to have no influence on our character, as to require no sacrifice of our evil propensities; as to lead neither to prayer, nor humility, nor obedience. It is a most important part of the Gospel, that "Christ is made unto us righteousness;" which implies, that we are justified wholly by his death and merits, through faith; a doctrine greatly opposed to the unrenewed feelings of the human heart; one which our natural reason could never have discovered; and one which is expressly intended to exclude boasting, and to keep us low in the very

dust of humility, as conscious transgressors deeply involved in sin and guilt, without strength or merit, and needing a salvation wholly gratuitous and undeserved. Yet even this doctrine may be admitted in words, without producing its proper effect upon the heart: we may deceive ourselves with a mere profession of faith, while there are none of its fruits visible in our life and character; and may speak of the Redeemer as made unto us "righteousness and redemption," while we are not cultivating that "sanctification" which is the proof of our interest in the other blessings of his death and passion. Persons are too apt to generalize in religion; to acknowledge the duty of being holy, while they neglect to cultivate those individual graces in the union of which holiness consists. To guard against these and other dangerous errors, let us, by the grace of God, and in humble reliance on the blessed influences of his Holy Spirit, proceed to consider what the Apostle intended to teach by the doctrine that "Christ is made unto us sanctification."

In considering the scope of the words of the text, it is necessary to reflect upon the connexion in which they are introduced. The Apostle was commencing his First Epistle to the church of Corinth; a church conspicuous for its spiritual gifts, and unhappily not less so for the dissen-

tions which had been introduced into it. After referring to these two points, he proceeds to notice the simplicity of his own preaching among them, and to shew of how little estimation were worldly wisdom and dignity in the sight of God, who by means apparently the most unlikely, by the simple preaching of the Cross of Christ, had confounded the wisdom of the wise and the pride of the mighty. He shews, in a word, that a most important object of the Gospel was to exclude boasting, that no flesh should glory in the presence of God. Hence he resolves the whole of our salvation, from beginning to end, into the free grace, the unmerited mercy of God in Christ Jesus. He attributes no excellence to man; even the exalted gifts and graces of the Corinthian Church were no exception to the general rule of human guilt and feebleness. Of those and all other things lovely and of good report in the Christian character, he represents God the Father as the fountain, and Jesus Christ as the channel of communication. Is the Christian "wise unto salvation?" He was naturally ignorant like others, but Christ was "*made unto him wisdom.*" Is he justified before God? Like others, he was naturally guilty and obnoxious to the Divine justice; but Christ was "*made unto him righteousness.*" Is he "a new creature," and "called to be a

saint?" Naturally he was, like others, sinful and unclean, but Christ was "*made unto him sanctification.*" Our "*redemption,*" whether from the tyranny of sin, from the dominion of Satan, from the power of the grave, and from eternal punishment, with all the separate links in this golden chain of blessings, the Apostle teaches us to ascribe solely to this Divine and inexhaustible source. Therefore, far from boasting of personal attainments, far from raising contentions in the church of Christ respecting the superiority of particular teachers, saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," "let him," says the Apostle, "that glorieth, glory in the Lord."

The text, therefore, under consideration, is intended as an argument for Christian humility. Not only is *justification* purchased without any merit on our part, and freely bestowed upon the penitent sinner through faith, but even our *sanctification*, even the spiritual graces which are shed abroad in our hearts, even our knowledge, and zeal, and love to God, and our Christian charity for the souls and bodies of our fellow-creatures, with every other good word or work which God by his Holy Spirit may enable us to perform, are derived from Jesus Christ. It "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell;" and "of his fulness have we all received, and grace for

grace." It was this important doctrine,—a doctrine so well calculated to humble human pride, and to teach us to attribute all the glory of our salvation not to ourselves, the recipients, but to God in Christ, the fountain,—that St. Paul seems chiefly to have intended to teach us in the words of the text.

In order, however, to understand more fully the nature of the Apostle's remark, we may view the subject in another aspect. We find in Scripture the work of our sanctification attributed at different times to the Three Co-equal Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity. St. Jude speaks of the *Father* as sanctifying us: the *Holy Spirit* is peculiarly the agent of our sanctification; and in the words of the text, and other passages, sanctification is attributed to *Jesus Christ*. We may more fully perceive the consistency of these descriptions, by considering our sanctification in three different points of view, as particularly connected with the Three Persons of the Sacred Trinity.

If, in the first place, we inquire for its *originating source*, we trace it, like all other blessings of Redemption, to the infinite love of God the Father, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," not only to "die for our offences, and rise again for our justification," but to procure for us the gift of the Holy Spirit for our sanctification. Hence it is said, that

we are "chosen of God to salvation through sanctification;" and the Apostle devoutly thanks the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

If from the originating source of this great blessing, we turn, secondly, to the *meritorious cause* of it, we shall find this to be the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And to bring forward no other instance, St. Paul, in the words of the text, speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as equally our righteousness and our sanctification; thus teaching us that great truth in the Christian life, that when God in his mercy delivers the transgressor from the guilt of sin, he begins also to subdue its power.

If, in the third place, we inquire into the *efficacious* cause of our sanctification, we shall perceive it to be the Holy Spirit, whose peculiar office it is to enlighten our understandings, to regenerate our souls to promote in us heavenly desires, and, in a word, to carry on in our hearts the life of faith through its various stages. All

the graces of the Christian character, such as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," are emphatically entitled "the fruits of the Spirit," it is He who dispenses them to us: He ploughs up the rocky soil, to fit it for the reception of the Divine word: He sows that word in the heart thus prepared for its reception; he fosters it with the benignant rays of his sacred influences; he waters it with his blessing; and at length he so brings it to maturity that it bears good fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold, to the praise and glory of God.

Thus we perceive that the Three Persons in the Godhead are respectively concerned in effecting this as well as the other parts of our salvation. The words of the text, however, refer us chiefly to the Second Person in the sacred Trinity, and require us more particularly to consider in what manner Christ Jesus is *made unto us sanctification.* Now it is evident that he is so, as already stated, on account of our sanctification being a part of our salvation, and, as such, a part of the purchase of his blood. That new nature which is necessary to fit us for the eternal inheritance, is as much one of the gifts which he received for men as the inheritance itself. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, speaks of our being "chosen" and "accepted" in Christ; and of

our adoption, justification, redemption, holiness, and glorification being also through him.

But not only may our sanctification be attributed to Christ as the meritorious Author, but he is, further, the Great Depository in which it is treasured. Hence the Holy Spirit takes of the things which are his, and reveals them to us. By means of our union with him by faith, we derive supplies of holiness from his immeasurable fulness: he dwells in us, and we in him; and as the branch brings forth good fruit in consequence of its junction with the parent stock, so we become wise unto salvation, and partakers of sanctification, by means of this vital connexion with Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

The Redeemer is further made our sanctification, as it is by his Holy Spirit that it is effected, and as it is in a great measure by the study of his unspotted life that we learn its nature and extent. He is made our sanctification, because he has exhibited an all-perfect example for our imitation, and because he has taught us the beauty of holiness in his precepts, and exhibited it in his character. He is made our sanctification, further, because he has manifested in his death the displeasure of God against sin, and the infinite necessity of holiness. He is our sanctification, again, because we are constrained by his love to a cheerful obedience,

and derive from his sacred Cross, the zeal, the gratitude, the affection which prompt us to a holy submission to his laws. In these and similar respects may we consider the assertion of the Apostle verified in the spiritual life of every Christian.

In considering, however, the Redeemer as our sanctification, it is necessary that we should beware of taking up an unscriptural view of this subject, and such a one as would be detrimental to our progress in holiness. It would be an error most injurious to our souls to contemplate our sanctification merely as something laid up in Christ, instead of something derived from him for our personal benefit. Our justification was a work done *for* us; but sanctification is a work done *in* us. The former is through the righteousness of God in Christ, imputed to us by faith; the latter is imparted to us by his Holy Spirit. We are justified by another, as a person may have his debt discharged by a friend; but we cannot thus be made wise or holy. The right or title to heaven was transferred freely to us; but the qualification for its enjoyment must be made our own. There must be a newness of nature, a holy principle implanted in us by the Spirit of God, to render us fit for that blessed mansion. The holiness of Jesus Christ will not profit a man who lives and dies unholy. The Holy Spirit

must work *in* us: we also must co-operate with him: we must not resist his influences; but must invite them by prayer, retain them with watchfulness, and make use of them with diligence. We must be holy, and active, and self-denying. It would be an incorrect and unscriptural view of the text, to suppose that it means that our sanctification is as it were something reserved for us, laid up as in a storehouse, instead of being infused into our souls. We cannot scripturally or reasonably speak of our Saviour in his capacity of a physician *imputing* health to us; or in his kingly office as imputing love to his commands and zeal for his glory. These things must be deeply inwrought in us: they must become our own; not, indeed, meritoriously, or as self-derived, but as gifts from above, freely bestowed upon us, and essentially necessary to constitute us true believers. Yet even in this view we are not passive receivers of sanctification: the Holy Spirit operates by influencing our wills, correcting our judgments, refining our affections; and thus enabling us to "work out our salvation," under His blessed influences who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Boasting is excluded; but exertion is not. We must, as the Scriptures express it, walk, run, strive, wrestle, fight, actively engage our heart and all our powers in the work of ensuring

our salvation. We must mortify sin; subdue the unhallowed propensities of the mind, and oppose with every nerve the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are not inactive duties: they require constant vigilance, with hourly exertion and prayer. To assist us in the performance of them, to supply power, and motive, and encouragement, Christ is revealed to us as our sanctification, and the Holy Spirit as our sanctifier; but not to render useless the various means of grace, or to supersede the earnest efforts of the regenerated soul in the attainment of so high a blessing. It would be most injurious to the honour of our Redeemer, as well as fatal to our own souls, to suppose that he came upon earth to relax the commands of God, or to abate the efforts of the renewed mind, for the attainment of personal holiness. It is true that the Christian can never be perfectly holy, while he remains in this world of sin and temptation, and retains a heart naturally disposed to every thing that is evil; but his wish and the object of his constant labour will be to be holy even as God is holy, and perfect as his Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The whole of this subject dictates its own application to the conscience and the circumstances of every professed Christian. If so great our privileges, how great also are our duties! If we desire the justification which is

by faith in Christ, how necessary the cultivation of that sanctification which is the fruit of faith! The time past has surely sufficed to follow our natural course, which leads to destruction; and if we have not hitherto turned to God, and begun to practise the duty and enjoy the privileges of willing dedication to our Creator, let us now at length lay the subject to heart. And while we use our earnest endeavours, let us not forget humbly to pray to Him who alone can direct and strengthen them to any effectual purpose. As a prayer suitable for this occasion, I shall conclude with that employed by our Church as the Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter, and which briefly combines the two-fold scriptural view of our blessed Saviour, as our justification and our sanctification. "Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

SERMON XXIV.

THE MERCIES OF GOD IN CHRIST.

EPHES. ii. 4—7.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

THE Apostle, in the foregoing verses, had described the fallen and wretched condition of mankind by nature. He had spoken of the Ephesian Christians, as "in time past dead in trespasses and sins, wherein they walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." And then, as if to shew that this corruption of nature and habit was not confined to the Ephesian converts, who had been heathens, degraded by superstition and idolatry, and immersed in gross vice and igno-

rance, he adds, "Among whom also," that is, among these unhappy slaves of sin and Satan, "we all"—all mankind; the Jew as well as the Gentile, even the Apostle himself in the days of his unconversion,—"we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath even as others." Such was the universal condition of the world: we all like sheep had gone astray; we had turned every one to his evil way; we had come short of the glory of God; we had exposed ourselves to eternal punishment by our transgressions; and in this condition we were unable of ourselves to help ourselves, and no natural means of escape were open to us from the wrath to come. "But," adds the Apostle, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."

This full and impressive passage teaches us, First, the blessings which God bestows on his servants; and, Secondly, the fountain from which they flow.

First. Let us consider the inestimable blessings here mentioned. These are, *being quickened with Christ; being raised up together with him; and being made to sit in heavenly places in him.* In the former chapter, the Apostle had spoken of "the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward who believe," in other words, the converting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart of the Christian, as a power similar to that "which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The same allusion seems to be continued in the text. Our new creation, our spiritual privileges, our growth in holiness, our hopes of glory, and our final admission to the bliss of heaven, are spoken of in reference to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. In baptism, we were buried with him; and, as he rose from the grave, so by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, we are raised from the death of trespasses and sins, to a life of righteousness, the prelude to an eternal life of glory in heaven. By means of the union which exists between the Christian and his Saviour, the resurrection and ascension of Christ become pledges as well as emblems of that spiritual resurrection and ascension which are the privilege of all true believers.

The blessings here mentioned will appear the more exalted, the more closely they are examined. Some blessings are universal; such as creation, preservation, and the gift of God's beloved Son for the redemption of a lost world. Others are more limited in their operation; such as many temporal mercies, and those outward religious privileges which are afforded to different ages, nations, and individuals in very various degrees, and for which each person will have to account, according to his opportunities of knowing the will of God. But the blessings mentioned in the text are the peculiar privilege of those who receive the Gospel in faith and obedience; they alone, either in possession or in prospect, are quickened with Christ, raised with him, and made to sit in heavenly places. All other persons are, as the Ephesians once were, dead to God, and without any well-grounded hope for futurity. The blessing is indeed freely *offered* to all; but it actually *belongs* only to those who have earnestly sought after it in the divinely revealed way of God's appointment.

1. The Christian is "quickened."—Spiritual life is breathed into his soul. He is made alive with Christ by a new and heavenly birth: he opens his eyes on new prospects; he is influenced by new principles: he is no longer insensible to his own sinful and perishing state

by nature; but he feels it deeply, and is anxious to learn the scriptural way of escape from the perils of his unhappy condition, and to flee to the Saviour for pardon and acceptance with God. This is no slight change: it is as distinct from man's natural state since the Fall, as light is from darkness, as life from death, as the ways of heaven from the ways of hell.

2. Thus quickened, the Christian is further "raised." Motion returns with life; and he quits that grave of sin and insensibility in which he had lain so long torpid. He begins to act from the impulse of his newly acquired perceptions; he enters cordially and diligently into the service of God; he sets about making his calling and election sure; he echoes, both in his creed and his life, the sentiment of the Apostle, that "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also"—we who are raised together with him—"should walk in newness of life; for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Nor is even this the whole extent of the privileges enumerated in the text; for,

3. The Christian is made "to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Not only is he admitted outwardly and sacramentally into the

fellowship of the Christian religion, but he partakes of its spiritual blessings: he experiences somewhat of its enjoyments; even on earth his hopes and his conversation are heavenly; and before him is the eternal reversion of the heavenly world. He is risen with Christ; and therefore he seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And as he is risen with Christ, he shall ascend with him; the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwells in him; and therefore he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall quicken his mortal body, by his Spirit that dwells in him, and both body and soul shall be for ever with the Lord.

These blessings are spoken of in the text as the gift of God: it is he who quickens us, and raises us, and makes us to sit in heavenly places; both figuratively, in our conversion and sanctification,—and literally, at the resurrection of the last day. All the steps in our salvation—the gift of Christ, the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, our repentance, faith, conversion, growth in grace, and eternal glorification—are traced up by the Apostle to the great Source of every good and perfect gift; and this leads us,

Secondly, to consider the fountain from which the blessings mentioned in the text

flow. The *nature* of the blessings themselves we have already seen; and the *medium* through which they are derived to us is also evident. That medium is Christ Jesus: his is the only name given under heaven by which men can be saved; he is the only Mediator with the Father; the only way by which, since the fall of man, any individual of our guilty race can approach his justly offended Creator with acceptance. The whole passage before us points out this sole medium; and that not only expressly, as when it says that "the kindness of God and the riches of his grace" are shewn to us "through Christ Jesus," but also in its general argument; in which there is a constant reference to the hope of pardon and glory by the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and also to that union between true believers and their Saviour, by means of which his resurrection, ascension, and glory, become symbols and pledges of their spiritual resemblance to him in these points now, and their still more literal resemblance as respects their entrance on the future world.

But though we have thus considered the blessings themselves, and the medium through which they flow to us, the question still returns; What fountain supplied such immeasurable benefits? Whence originated the plan of human redemption, involving as it did no

less costly a sacrifice than the unutterable sufferings and death of the incarnate Son of God? What was the first cause of this vast scheme of beneficence to a lost world? Was there any merit in mankind to constitute a *claim* to this stupendous display of Divine philanthropy? Were there even any mitigating circumstances to smooth the way to its exertion? The farthest from it possible. Nothing can be stronger than the language of the Apostle, in the very verses which go before the text, as to the universally sinful and guilty condition of the whole human race; and these expressions are in full accordance with the general tenor of the sacred Scriptures. Merit then is completely out of the question. If Divine compassion had waited till we had deserved the exercise of it, or even till we had earnestly sought after it, our case had been hopeless. The blessing, spring from whatever source it might, must, as far as respects us, be free, without money and without price; a point so essential to be known and felt, that the Apostle, in the fifth verse, stops in the very middle of his argument to enforce it. "By grace ye are saved;" a parenthesis short but most significant, and leading us to beware of imputing any of the merit or the power of our spiritual life, resurrection, or salvation to ourselves. In order, however, to prevent any

possibility of misapprehension as to this vital point, he does not content himself with the parenthesis in the text; but the moment he has finished his sentence, he repeats and enlarges on the doctrine in the succeeding verses (the 8th and 9th), where he says,—"By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." As far then as respects us, there was nothing, except indeed our extreme misery and helplessness, to cause the infinite display of Divine beneficence recorded in the text. The fountain then of all our blessings was,

1. "The great *love* wherewith God loved us." God is love: this is the original bond of union between him and the creatures whom he has made,—the inexhaustible source from which flow all the blessings of creation, preservation, and redemption. We are not to view the Almighty as a tyrant, more prone to inflict penalties than to confer mercies. Such is not his character: he is "the Lord God, full of compassion and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." The whole plan and accomplishment of human salvation originated in this Divine attribute; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

2. But the Apostle speaks not only of the great love of God as the source of the benefits bestowed on us, but also of the "richness of his *mercy*." Love was the moving cause; but this love had been abused and requited with ingratitude: our sins also had separated between us and our Creator; his image in our souls was defaced, and there was nothing left in us calculated, if we may so speak, to attract the kind regard of an equitable and Holy Being. On the contrary, he was justly displeased with us on account of our transgressions, and even the love which he bore to his once innocent, but now fallen and rebellious creature, would not interpose to thwart the claims of truth and justice. Under these circumstances love took the form of mercy. He loved us because he had created us; and he compassionated us because we had fallen from the high privileges of our creation. Love was his inclination to do us good: mercy was pity added to love, and displayed in compassing and completing our redemption.

3. But the Apostle adds yet another motive which co-operated in the Divine Mind in the work of our salvation; namely, "that in the ages to come God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." He saw fit to connect the exhibition of his own glory with the re-

demption and sanctification of our fallen race. He determined to add lustre to his attributes in the eyes of his universal creation, by making mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. "The ages to come," that is, both the times of the Gospel dispensation and the eternal ages of futurity, were to witness this exuberance of the Divine compassion, and to celebrate and adore the Author of this inestimable gift. Greatly as the perfections of God were exhibited in the works of creation and the ordinary dispensations of an all-wise Providence, it was his "kindness towards us in Christ Jesus," in mercifully effecting our redemption, in bringing us to the knowledge of it, in leading us to newness and holiness of life as the grateful recipients of it, and in bestowing on us its blessed fruits in a future world, that was most emphatically to exhibit "the exceeding riches of his grace." Human happiness could add nothing to the unalterable self-derived felicity of the Supreme Author of all blessings; yet God has not disdained to humble himself to our capacities by representing the exhibition of his glory as a motive with him for causing his love to operate for our redemption, sanctification, and eternal happiness.

What then remains but that we seriously ask

our own hearts, Are we partakers of these benefits? Are we quickened by the Holy Spirit? Are we raised from the death of trespasses and sins? Are we exalted in our affections to spiritual and heavenly objects? Or, on the contrary, are we still living without God and without hope in the world, dead to religion and heedless of our everlasting welfare. Let conscience seriously answer these momentous inquiries; and let it be our earnest prayer that God would bestow on us a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us; and that we may henceforth live as becomes those who profess to be quickened and raised with him who is, in name at least, and ought to be in truth, our Lord and Master and Example.

SERMON XXV.

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD.

ROMANS xi. 22.

Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

THE whole Bible is designed to shew us the justice and the mercy of God; his displeasure against the sinners, and his favour to the righteous. This great truth is exhibited in various ways: it is foretold in prophecies; it is illustrated by examples; it is declared in promises and threatenings. The rejection of the apostate spirits from heaven, and the unchangeable bliss of those who kept their first estate, teach us in an impressive manner this almighty goodness and severity. The same Divine attributes appear also conspicuously in the creation and fall of man; who was placed in paradise, happy in the favour of God, and surrounded with whatever could prove the goodness of his bountiful Creator, but who, when he broke the command

of that infinitely good and powerful Being, fell under his just displeasure, and incurred the awful penalty due to his transgressions; from which no way of escape would have been open, had not he against whom he had sinned, devised, through the incarnation and death of his beloved Son, a plan of grace and reconciliation, by which the transgressor might be pardoned and accepted, in full accordance no less with the justice than the mercy of his offended Creator. We might proceed throughout the sacred volume to point out the exhibition of these two attributes, always in unison with each other, and both affording the strongest proof of the excellence and perfection of the character of God. The history of the Jews, in particular, which occupies a large portion of the sacred page, is the most remarkable illustration upon record of the course of his providence, both as respects his severity and his goodness. Oftentimes he delivered them: but they rebelled against him, and then his anger fell upon them, till they repented and turned again to him; when his mercy was ever prompt to pardon their transgressions, and to relieve their necessities. His goodness delivered them out of Egypt; his just severity punished them in the wilderness; his goodness brought them into an inheritance flowing with milk and honey; his severity banished them, for their rebellion and

idolatry, into the land of their enemies; his goodness filled their cup with blessings; oftentimes it spared them amidst their provocations; it gave them line upon line, and precept upon precept; but when all proved unavailing for their amendment; when they despised his long suffering, and continued to break his commandments, God poured out the vials of his displeasure upon them; and as their privileges had been great beyond example, great beyond example was their punishment. "It shall come to pass," said Jehovah to them, "that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nought."

But the most awful instance of the righteous severity of God towards this his once favoured people, is that to which the Apostle alludes, in the chapter from which our text is taken; namely, his rejection of them on account of their rejection of Christ. They were too apt to think that the promises made to their forefathers secured to them the favour of God, whatever might be their conduct: they trusted in outward privileges; they were proud of their temple and their priesthood,—of a long line of prophets, whose warnings they had despised,—of a pious ancestry, whose names they disgraced,—of an Almighty Lawgiver, whose statutes they diso-

beyed. At length they crowned all their transgressions by crucifying the Lord of life and glory, and rejecting the only true sacrifice for sin. Then came upon them destruction to the uttermost: their civil polity was dissolved; their temple, their priesthood, and their law of ceremonies were set aside: they were no longer entitled to the name of a church or people; the Gentiles, whom they despised, were received into the place which they had occupied; and a new church was gathered out of every nation, consisting of all the faithful in Christ Jesus,—of all who should acknowledge the only Name given under heaven by which men can be saved, and who, as penitent sinners, should place their dependence on his death and merits alone for pardon and acceptance with God.

But it is not to the case of the Jews only that the Apostle confines his argument; he shews that it applies to all to whom the mercy of the Gospel should be offered: for as our privilege is great in being introduced to this unspeakable blessing, so is our danger great if we neglect it. The goodness which opened to us this infinite treasury of benefits will, in our instance, as in that of the Jews, give place to severity if we do not "continue in that goodness;" that is, if we do not avail ourselves of it, and act in compliance with it: if we forget the medium through which we obtain the be-

nefit, or neglect to live to the glory of Him who bestowed it.

With this practical application to our own case, let us first contemplate the two attributes of God mentioned in the text; namely, his goodness and his severity; and then the issue upon which the exhibition of them depends,—namely, on our "falling" or "continuing in his goodness."

First, then, the text sets before us two conspicuous attributes of God; his goodness and his severity; both of which have a most powerful bearing upon our present and eternal interests.

1. His goodness. God cannot be otherwise than good; he is perfectly happy in himself, and wills the happiness of all his creatures. No evil or unamiable motive can affect any of his proceedings; for even his inflictions of punishment on account of sin, tend to the real welfare of his creation. In all his proceedings towards mankind he "commends his love towards us." The very heathen, St. Paul teaches, were not left without ample proof of it, "in that he did good and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness;" but how much more does his own revealed word attest it, especially when we remember that the benefits bestowed

upon us are conferred, not upon meritorious and grateful beings, but upon offenders against him, who deserve only his wrath and condemnation. For his goodness shewed itself surpassingly in that infinite plan of mercy, to accomplish which the Son of God took upon him our nature, and suffered pain, contempt, and a cruel death for our transgressions. And this goodness still continues to be exercised towards us, in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts; in the intercession of Christ in heaven on our behalf; in the promises made to us, the warnings bestowed upon us, the hopes held out to us; in the long suffering and mercy which we every moment experience; and in the joys and consolations which will be our lot, in proportion as we are walking humbly with our God. Truly do the Scriptures testify that the Lord is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him. Above all, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

2. But another attribute of God is mentioned in the text; namely, his severity; that is, his truth and justice in operation for the punishment of sin: for though the word severity

is not perhaps any where else applied in the Scriptures to the infinite Source of Benevolence, yet all that is said of his displeasure against sin, and his justice in inflicting punishment for it, amounts to a severity fearful beyond expression. For who shall stand when God is angry? and angry most justly has he cause to be against the whole race of mankind. The sinner, when suffering eternally the fearful retribution due to his offences, will never be able to allege that the most severe displeasure of his Creator was inconsistent either with his justice or his goodness; for his own heart will be his accuser, and his sins will appear before him in their deepest aggravations, and with all their tremendous consequences. The Scriptures forcibly set before us this just severity of God, in order that we may flee from it. They do not buoy us up with false hopes of escape, while we live a life of disobedience to his commandments; they tell us plainly, that his wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness; and that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord JesusChrist; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his

power. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath."

Secondly, Such being the goodness and the severity of God, and our present and eternal interest being deeply involved in their exercise, it is most important that we should inquire how we may escape the one, and enjoy the benefits of the other. Now the text supplies us with a very impressive illustration of this point, and which we should each endeavour to apply to our own circumstances. "Behold," says the Apostle, "the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity, but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." From the spirit of this passage, we learn that God willeth not the death of a sinner; that his goodness is prompt to benefit us; that he bears long with us; that if we continue in his goodness, if we despise not the riches of his grace, but lay hold of his offered mercy in Christ Jesus, and walk in the way of his commandments, he will not take from us his loving-kindness; he will fulfil towards us all the promises of his word, as he did to the Israelites, pardoning our sins, guiding us through the present evil world, as he did them through the wilderness of Sinai, delivering us spiritually,

as he did them literally, from every enemy; and translating us at length to that blessed and eternal inheritance of which the promised land of Canaan was but a feeble type; but that if we fall from him, if we continue disobedient to his laws, and refuse to embrace the salvation freely offered to us in Christ Jesus, he will visit us with the severity of his anger, and "cut us off" for ever from his presence. Such was his conduct towards his once favoured people. He revealed himself to them; he gave them his laws: he forgave their offences, he defended them with his Almighty arm, he fed them with bread from heaven; they were ignorant, and he sent his prophets to instruct them; they were guilty, and he revealed the means of pardon for their transgressions: he made them his own peculiar people; nothing, in short, was wanting on his part that could shew his goodness towards them. But what, in return, was their conduct towards him? Let us ask our own hearts what has been ours, and this will furnish the answer. They did not make that just and grateful return which his goodness deserved; they disobeyed him; they broke his laws; they were ever prone to wander from him, and to seek for happiness in pursuits which they knew he had forbidden. They indeed kept up the outward forms of devotion to his service; they worshipped in his temple, and boasted of

their privileges as his people; but their hearts went after their idols; and, to complete their transgressions, after slighting and persecuting his servants whom he sent to urge them to repentance, they rejected and crucified his beloved Son, thus spurning the very means of pardon which he had devised for human transgression.

This was the issue upon which their lot depended: this it was which drew down the severity of God upon them, and caused him to cut them off from his covenant. It was not merely that they had been transgressors against his law, but that they obstinately persisted in their transgression; that they refused to turn to him, and rejected the only means of pardon and reconciliation. And this is still the issue with regard to ourselves. We, like them, have experienced the goodness of God, but like them we have not made the requital which it deserved; yet mercy is still offered to us; his just severity is suspended; the way of peace continues open; we are invited to turn to him, and a promise is given to us of entering into his rest. But if, like the Jews, we despise or neglect these overtures of God's mercy, can it be otherwise than that we should be visited with his anger? May he not most justly address us, as he did his disobedient people of old; "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not

done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take down the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." He did this to the Jews as a nation; and may he not justly display the same severity individually against us, inflicting upon us his judgments temporal and eternal for our sins; blotting us out from his covenant, and leaving us to that worst of enemies, our own corrupt heart, unrestrained by the grace of his Holy Spirit? This is the very lesson which the Apostle inculcates upon us in the text and the preceding verses. It was because of unbelief, he says, that the Jews were rejected: the natural branches were broken off, and we Gentiles, as a wild olive tree, were grafted in and became partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. But it is only by faith, he adds, that we stand: we ought not, therefore, to be high-minded, but to fear; for it is not the general purpose of God's mercy towards the Gentiles that can be of any avail to us individually: even among his ancient people all were not Israel who were of Israel;

and so now, all are not Christians in truth who are such in name, or by baptism and profession. God requires the obedience of the heart, true faith in Christ, and a sincere dedication of ourselves to his service. In vain we trust in any religious ceremonies or outward privileges; the Jews had once the exclusive enjoyment of these; yet they fell, and were cut off. "If therefore," says the Apostle, "God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest also he spare not thee." "These things happened to them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come: wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The mercy of God is indeed infinite; the atonement of Christ is all-sufficient; and his Holy Spirit is denied to none who ask him: but let us ever remember, that the issue on which our final interest in his mercies depends, is in our "continuing in his goodness:" if we fall from him, we must expect his severity; but if we cleave to him with full purpose of heart, he will grant unto us pardon and peace and eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

1 COR. XV. 53, 54.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality: then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

ALL men are naturally appalled at the thought of death. They see in it an enemy who lurks about their path by night and by day, to rob them of all they account valuable; to deprive them of their possessions, their honours, their pleasures, their very earthly being itself. Still more are they appalled, when they look beyond it, and remember, that after death comes judgment; that not only is every earthly tie broken, but that they must enter upon a new and eternal state of existence for which they feel themselves unprepared, and which, when they review their transgressions against their Creator,

they cannot but fear will be a state of the bitterest misery. But the true believer views this last enemy in a very different light. He considers death, though a part of the original curse pronounced against sin, as having lost its sting to all who die in Christ. He thinks of dying, or wishes to think of it, not with its original terrors; but as one link in the golden chain by which all the privileges of this world and that which is to come are bound together. Without death he cannot enter upon a blissful eternity; he must continue in a world of change and trial, of sin and temptation, of sorrow and bereavement; a world which is not his home, and is incapable of making him really happy. To be happy therefore, unspeakably happy, eternally happy, he must die. Yet still death is awful; the body and soul, which in the present state of being have been constant companions, must be separated: the former must become senseless, motionless, breathless; it must decay; it must mix with its native dust; it must lose all that distinguished it as a living body; it must exchange warmth and action, and cheerfulness and loveliness, for all that is most painful and revolting to the natural senses and perceptions. The soul in the mean time, disentangled from the flesh, has winged its flight to the presence of God. Though hitherto known only in connexion with its mortal habi-

tation, it is not dependent upon it; it can exist disembodied; it survives, either a happy spirit before the throne of God, or a condemned spirit in the world of darkness and despair.

But shall this disunion last for ever? In the world of blessedness is only the soul redeemed and safely housed, beyond the reach of earthly storms; and in the world of misery, is the body, which was the companion of the soul in sin, exempt from its share of punishment? The word of God alone can answer this inquiry. Multitudes of the heathen, perhaps the large majority, have scarcely any intelligible persuasion of the resurrection either of the body or the soul; and, of those who acknowledge the latter, very few seem to have any fixed opinion respecting the former; so that, even by the Athenians themselves, St. Paul was accounted a babbler, for preaching the resurrection of the body. The soul they could perhaps more easily think of as incorruptible, and heir to a future existence; but the body, being corruptible, being actually seen in a state of dissolution, they could not look beyond its present degraded condition, to comtemplate its resurrection. Yet the youngest child who has been instructed in the Holy Scriptures, has learned this surprisingly interesting and momentous truth. Our belief in the resurrection of the body is expressed in the very

same creeds, and with the same certainty, as even our belief in a God. And with the revelation of our Creator in our hands, well may it be so expressed. For it was disclosed in the early stages of that revelation; so that the patriarch Job knew that, though worms should destroy his earthly dwelling, yet that, in the latter day, he should in his flesh see God. But we need not go back to dates so ancient; for we live under a dispensation in which life and immortality are more visibly brought to light, through Christ Jesus; we are not left to doubt whether these mortal bodies, which, frail and sinful as they are, are still endeared to us by innumerable sympathies and tender associations, by our attachments and friendships towards those whom we have known and loved in the present life, shall be preserved and glorified, so as to become fit dwellings for our immortal spirits. The certainty of this truth is revealed to us in Scripture beyond any possibility of mistake: it shall so be: "this corruptible," as the Apostle Paul declares in our text, "*must* put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality."

The Apostle, when he penned this declaration, was replying to a twofold inquiry, or objection, which might be brought respecting the doctrine of the resurrection. "But some

man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?"

The former question he passes over very shortly. Do you ask, as though he said, how this thing can be: what power is sufficient for so mighty, so miraculous, a process? The power of God is sufficient: by that power the seed sown in the ground, while it seems to die away and to be for ever lost, is clothed with new properties, and is made to vegetate with teeming life and beauty: "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body." Thus we learn, even from the inferior works of his creation, his ability to raise these feeble and mortal bodies from their slumber in the grave, and to clothe them with immortality. But far more clearly and convincingly do we see this power displayed in the resurrection of Christ. Here is a proof that cannot be questioned; for "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." So far as respects the ability of God, if evidence were necessary on such a point, we thus have evidence the strongest, and exactly applicable to the case: we have not only our own miraculous creation and preservation from day to day, but we have the resurrection of Christ, the pledge, the proof, the pattern of our own. God therefore *can*

raise the dead; and he who is thus able is equally faithful to his promise or his threatening; therefore God *will* raise the dead.

The second inquiry the Apostle considers more at length, yet still without attempting to administer to the gratification of a vain and useless curiosity. "With what body do they come?" Is it a body like, or unlike, the present? What are its qualities? What is its appearance? What are its offices? Is it capable of the same pains and pleasures? Will it be recognized by those who had shared its joys and sorrows upon earth? To no such inquiry is any reply given; yet all is disclosed to us on the subject that it was necessary for us to know, or that perhaps we could understand. The Apostle tells us, in substance, that as our present body is conformable to the purposes of our earthly existence, so the body which shall be raised at the last day, shall be fitted for its new existence in the eternal world.

Such a change, he further informs us, was essentially necessary; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Even in the natural creation, he argues, there is a variety of bodies suited to the different arrangements which the Creator designed them to fulfil; there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; and among these themselves there are differences according to their natures, all terrestrial

bodies not being alike; for there is one flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds: and all celestial bodies not being alike, for there is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another of the stars; one star differing from another in glory. So also in the resurrection of the dead there is a change, whatever it be, to fit each glorified body to its allotted station. So necessary indeed is such a change, adds the Apostle, that even in the case of those who are alive at the coming of Christ, it shall pass upon them: they shall be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

In describing this change, the Apostle notices various particulars, in which there shall be a great and glorious, though, to our present imperfect faculties, incomprehensible renovation. Keeping up the analogy of seed committed to the ground, which forcibly represents the last rites offered to the mortal body, he says, "It is sown in corruption:" it moulders away: it shews no symptom of returning life; on the contrary, it mixes with its dust, and appears no more. But how is it raised? "It is raised in incorruption;" without any vestige

of mortality; and heir to a never-ending existence. So again, "it is sown in dishonour;" it has lost its strength, its beauty, its animation; it has become offensive to the beholder; it is cast away "as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure." It is a "vile," because a sinful, body. But "it is raised in glory;" a glory the nature of which we cannot conceive, but which, the Apostle elsewhere tells us, renders it like the glorious or glorified body of the risen Saviour. All that once dishonoured it shall be for ever unknown; and it shall be invested with the dignity due to it as originally formed by the hand of God, as redeemed, in common with the soul, by the blood of Christ, and as the receptacle of a blessed and eternal spirit. Again; "it is sown in weakness." Weak indeed, even beyond the weakness of earliest infancy; conquered by death, and preyed upon by worms. Yet how shall it be raised? Shall it be with the weakness with which it was laid in the tomb; bearing on it the ravages of time and disease, of mutilation and decay, of corruption and of death? No: for "it is raised in power." The Almighty Power that raises it shall endue it with energies unknown to it in its former condition; with a spirit of life and vigour that shall never become extinct. Again; "it is sown a natural body;" it was subject in its

earthly state, to the pains and sorrows, to the sins and temptations, of its mortal and fallen condition; it had an animal existence fitted to the place of its temporary abode, but wholly unfit for its intended residence among the blessed spirits in heaven; but "it is raised a spiritual body,"—a body freed from all mortal passions, all inlets to danger, all incentives to evil. It will not hunger or thirst; it will not feel fatigue or anguish; it will not be subjected to the vicissitudes of the seasons, to the heat of summer or the cold of winter; it will not need the aid of sleep or repose, to recruit powers which can never be exhausted; for it is "a spiritual body." What a spiritual body is, we cannot fully comprehend: it is enough for us to know that it is a body such as is required for its re-union to a spirit freed from all that is sinful, and destined to enjoy for ever the purities and felicities of the heavenly world. Lastly, it was a mortal body. In consequence of sin, the seeds of dissolution were sown within it; no sooner was it endued with life, than it tended towards death, which, but for the preserving hand of God, would have subdued it, not after many months or years of existence, but in the very first feeble dawn of its being. This mortal tendency was seen in the pains and disorders which visited it; in the feebleness of its infancy, the feverishness of its

manhood, the languor and decrepitude of its age. But when it is raised "it puts on immortality;" it enjoys eternal youth; one never-ceasing spring and noon-tide of life. For says our text, "Death is swallowed up in victory." It has lost its sting; its victims have been rescued from its grasp; its conquests are no more. A more powerful arm has disarmed it; for it is God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. As in Adam we died, so in Christ we are made alive. Sinful, mortal, and exposed to the eternal death pronounced upon the ungodly, we are by faith in the Redeemer justified freely in the sight of God: our transgressions are forgiven; we are "accepted in the Beloved;" and after the short conflict of the present life we are translated to a kingdom of eternal glory, where none of the vestiges of sin, none of the ravages of death, nothing that is frail, or imperfect, or sorrowful, shall be for ever known. There, after the judgment which shall finally separate the righteous from the wicked, the former shall shine as stars in the kingdom of their Father; they shall be for ever with the Lord. "I saw," says St. John, after describing the day of judgment, "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea; and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her

husband; and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

And are we not ready to exclaim, in contemplating these animating prospects,—the soul for ever rescued from sin and sorrow, the body raised from the dead and gloriously changed, and both reunited in the enjoyment of happiness eternal,—"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power?" Yes, blessed indeed; infinitely blessed. But then in proportion to the inestimable value of the blessing is the loss, if we come short of it. Let us then seriously ask our own hearts, Are we aspiring after this blessedness? Are we diligently inquiring how it may be attained? Are we shunning all that is inconsistent with it? Are we seeking it in the only way which God has appointed for arriving at it; not living in carelessness and indifference; not in a state of formalism and self-righteousness; but depending wholly upon the merits of the Saviour and endeavouring by the grace of God to walk in his steps. For if we would "bear the image

of the heavenly," as on earth we have borne the image of the earthly; if we would see God, and be like him, and enjoy his presence for ever, we must begin to be like him here: our souls must be renewed after his image in righteousness and true holiness. These bodies, which, if we are true members of Christ, will undergo so glorious a change hereafter, must not be made the instruments of sin upon earth. If we die thoughtless and worldly, impenitent and unbelieving, no miracle will be wrought after our decease, to qualify us for the enjoyment of heaven. The holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, must be engrafted in us in the present state. We must be prepared for an eternal world, by repentance, and faith, and sanctification of heart and life. Then, unworthy though we are, yet, through the infinite merits of our Saviour, those mansions of blessedness shall be our eternal portion. There safely arrived, we shall find it to have been our highest wisdom to have made our calling and election sure while upon earth; to have prepared for death, judgment, and eternity while the brief space of life was allotted us for that purpose; to have entered as it were upon a course of spiritual education for the unseen world, and to have learned already those anthems of gratitude and adoration which are the delight of the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven.

SERMON XXVII.

THE JOY IN SAMARIA

ACTS viii 8.

And there was great joy in that city.

THE city here spoken of, called the city of Samaria, was possibly Sychem, or Sychar, where our Lord had himself preached in the beginning of his ministry. And what was the cause of the great joy mentioned in the text? When we see the population of a city festively thronging together, we naturally inquire into the reason of such a spectacle. Is it to celebrate the birth or marriage of some prince or ruler; or the success of a battle; or the return of some popular leader from the field of victory; or some rite or ceremony connected with the history and supposed honour and prosperity of the city? None of these were the causes of the joy that was exhibited in the city of Samaria: nor was it a joy which displayed itself in riot and intemperance; in the sinful indulgence of the appetites and passions; or in the pomp and

pride of worldly splendour. It was a joy of a higher and purer kind. The privileges which it celebrated, were infinitely more valuable than any merely earthly blessings. It was a joy caused by the intelligence of those glad tidings which the Son of God himself came into our fallen world to proclaim to mankind. It was the introduction of true religion, with all its attendant blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, into that city. "Then Philip," says the sacred historian, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."

In reflecting upon the cause and the character of this joy, the passage which has been cited will lead us to consider, First, the message which Philip proclaimed; and, Secondly, the reception it met with, and the effects which followed upon its proclamation and reception. On both these points, the narrative furnishes brief but explicit information.

First, then, we are to inquire what was the message which Philip had proclaimed.

The Philip here mentioned was Philip the deacon, who, after the death of St. Stephen and the general dispersion of the infant church of Christ, came to the city of Samaria, and, knowing that the wall of partition between the Jew and the Samaritan was now broken down, proclaimed to the inhabitants the coming of that promised Messiah, through whom alone both Jew and Gentile could be saved. It is said, in the fifth verse, that "Philip preached Christ unto them;" and again, at the twelfth, that "he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ."

To preach Christ to them was to shew them their need of him; to proclaim to them their iniquities and the anger of God against them; to teach them their inability to help themselves by their own supposed strength or virtue; and then to point them to the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour, who, though rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich. To preach Christ, was to exhibit him in all the relations which he is pleased to bear to guilty perishing sinners, redeeming them by his blood, justifying them freely by faith in virtue of his infinite merits, renewing them by his Holy Spirit, and ruling over them as willing subjects, causing them to triumph over death and hell, and translating them to his eternal glory in the kingdom of

heaven. It was not only as a Redeemer and a Mediator that Philip preached Christ, but also as a King, having authority to lay down laws for our conduct, and entitled to the fullest obedience of our hearts and lives. For it is said he preached to them "the kingdom of God;" that is, the Gospel dispensation; its constitution, its laws, its duties, its privileges. He exhorted them, as rebellious outcasts, to return to their allegiance to their Maker; to bow before the sceptre of his mercy and his power; to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel, as the only way of pardon for the past, and to seek his grace for the future, to live to his glory in a course of willing obedience to his commands. For it is the express constitution of this heavenly kingdom, that while it offers free and unmerited mercy, it insists upon a cordial and faithful allegiance. It is a kingdom of righteousness and true holiness; it provides a city of refuge not only from the punishment, but from the dominion of sin; it is the spiritual empire of Him who has said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" of Him "who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" of Him who dwells in the renewed heart as "the Spirit of holiness," "the very God of peace" to whom

we pray to "sanctify us wholly;" and who "sitteth as a refiner and purifier of silver, to purify the sons of Levi, and to purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." The kingdom of God preached by Philip was that everlasting dominion spoken of by Daniel, which should never be destroyed, but stand for ever; that kingdom the advancement of which in our own hearts, and in the world at large, we constantly pray for in the words which our Lord himself has taught us; that kingdom the charter of which is "glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good will to man."

Secondly, Having considered the message of mercy which Philip was commissioned to preach, we shall now inquire into the reception it met with, and the effects which followed upon its proclamation and reception. On these points, the chapter before us gives us particular information. We are told that the people "gave heed to the things which were spoken;" that they "believed" them; that they were in consequence "baptized;" that they "received the Holy Ghost;" that they forsook their evil ways, "the sorceries which had bewitched them," and were delivered from the dominion of "unclean spirits;" and lastly, in the language of

our text, that "they rejoiced with great joy." We shall briefly examine these several particulars.

1. They "gave heed to the things which were spoken." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" but we cannot arrive at a knowledge of that word, plain and simple as it is to every sincere inquirer, without due attention and consideration. The people of the city of Samaria, witnessing the miracles which Philip wrought, were incited to listen to the doctrine which he preached. This careful spirit of inquiry was the first step towards all the beneficial results which followed. They were anxious to hear, and to understand "the things that belonged to their peace." Unlike too many persons in the present day, who from their childhood to the close of life have the fullest opportunities of coming to a knowledge of what God has revealed in his word, of the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour, of the duties they owe to their Creator, the fearful punishments which await those who neglect his laws and slight his mercy, and the unspeakable rewards reserved for those who worship him in the Gospel of his Son; yet remain from year to year careless and inattentive to these most important of all subjects;—unlike such persons, the people of Samaria "gave heed to the things which were spoken;"

they were interested in what they heard, and reflected upon it as of infinite moment to their best welfare.

2. Such being the disposition of mind with which they listened to the preaching of the Gospel, we need not wonder to find it added that "they believed." The word of God carries with it the most powerful evidence of its truth to all who honestly listen to it. We have not indeed in the present day a continuance of those direct miracles which these people of Samaria witnessed; the Saviour has not personally visited our cities as he did theirs, or endued his ministers with the power of miraculously healing the sick and casting out devils; but we have the record of those very miracles handed down to us by credible witnesses, who sealed the truth of their testimony with their blood; and we discern also the same moral and spiritual effects in the hearts and lives of all who truly receive it, as "the power of God unto salvation." The Samaritans had "known Christ according to the flesh," as one who searcheth the inmost secrets of the heart: "Come see a man that told me all that ever I did:" but though we have not thus his immediate presence, we have the same testimony to the truth of his word, for it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of

soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Samaritans had witnessed unclean spirits come out of many that were possessed with them, and many that were taken with palsies, and that were lame, healed: we have the testimony of these facts, and also those spiritual miracles of healing, by which sinners are cleansed from their transgression, renewed after the image of Christ, transformed in the spirit of their minds, and translated from the kingdom of satan to that of the Son of God.

3. We next learn that the people of the city of Samaria, having attentively heard the word of God, and received it by faith, "were baptized." They were not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but hastened to confess him openly before men, by a compliance with his own appointed sacrament, by which all who should receive him as their Saviour, were to declare their belief in him in the presence of the church and of the world. It is not enough that we have a firm persuasion of the Divine inspiration and infinite importance of Christianity; we must be willing to take up the cross of our Saviour, and, whatever reproach may await us, remain firm and consistent in our profession of his name before mankind. In the present age no such peril or persecution assails us for calling ourselves Christians as threatened the first dis-

ciples of Christ; we are not exposed to pain of infamy or death for the sake of our professed religion; and to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, even in infancy, has become so general that it is often complied with as a customary rite, with scarcely any consideration of its meaning and importance, either on the part of those who present a child for baptism, or of the baptized person himself when he comes to years of reflection. But very different was the case at the time when these Samaritans became candidates for admission to this holy sacrament; for, in coming to the font of baptism, they solemnly recorded their belief in the Saviour, their reliance upon his atonement, and their determination to live to his glory. They declared by the very act their earnest resolution, through the grace of God strengthening them, "to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life." And with regard to ourselves, who were baptised in our infancy, our baptism is of no spiritual value to us, yea rather it will increase our condemnation, if, having thus named the name of Christ, we do not depart from iniquity. We

may say of it as the Apostle said of the Jewish rite of circumcision, that of itself "it availeth nothing, but a new creature:" it is only an outward and visible sign and seal of an inward and spiritual grace; which grace is the washing and regeneration of the soul, by virtue of faith in the atonement of Christ, and through the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.

4. This gift of the Holy Ghost, we are further informed in the narrative before us, was conferred upon the people of the city of Samaria. In the early days of the Christian church it pleased God in many instances to bestow upon its members not only the ordinary influences of his Holy Spirit, for their instruction, consolation, and sanctification, but also especial and miraculous gifts, for the confirmation and extension of the faith. Probably both the miraculous and the ordinary gifts of the Spirit were given to the church of Samaria: the former have long ceased; but the latter are still promised to every true Christian. It is the Holy Spirit who alone can open the heart, as he did that of Lydia, to attend to the things which are spoken in his word. To him must we look up, to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, to convert our hearts, to strengthen our faith, and to lead us in the paths of peace, of joy, and of devotion to the service of God.

5. This beneficial effect of the preaching and

reception of the Gospel was seen in the case of the people of Samaria. Hitherto, though not idolaters like the Gentiles, they had been following the evil inclinations of their unrenewed hearts; some of them were under the dominion of "unclean spirits;" and the whole of them, "from the least unto the greatest," had gone after "a certain man called Simon, who used sorcery, and bewitched the people." But now, believing the preaching of Philip, they turned from their deeds of darkness to newness and holiness of life. Whereas Satan and his ministers had hitherto borne the sway over them, they now became the servants of God. "One was their Master, even Christ," whose personal instructions to them, when he visited Samaria three or four years before, they probably well remembered; and to whom, as the promised Messiah, they now turned with full purpose of heart, trusting in his atonement, endeavouring to walk in his steps, and worshipping God in the manner he had taught them, "as a Spirit," "in spirit and in truth."

6. And in so doing "there was great joy in that city." The Gospel of Christ, wherever faithfully preached and cordially received, is a source, the only true source, of substantial happiness. The joy of the men of this world is founded on no solid basis; it is at the mercy of time, and chance, and casualty; but the

blessings of religion are satisfactory and durable: they include the pardon of sin, a conscience at peace with God, adoption into his family, the enjoyment of his favour, and the hope of everlasting glory in heaven. The healing of the sick, and the casting out of unclean spirits, which caused such joy in the city of Samaria, were expressive emblems of the spiritual blessings conveyed by the Gospel. We were weak, and we are strengthened; we were guilty, and we are pardoned; we were sinful, and we are cleansed; and if the angels themselves rejoice over a sinner that repenteth, how much more should the sinner himself rejoice when thus turned from the error of his ways, and restored to the favour of his Creator! Let us then, like the Samaritans in the text, give heed to the things which are spoken to us of God: let us believe them; let us duly estimate their importance; and let us hold them fast, amidst the troubles of life and in the hour of death, that we may find them the well-spring of happiness to all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

OUR LORD'S WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thy eyes.

THE circumstances under which these words were uttered, were very remarkable. It was the time of the Passover; and our Lord was approaching Jerusalem, with a view to celebrate its appointed rites. His way lay across the Mount of Olives, which was to the eastward of that city, at the distance of a few furlongs, and commanded a magnificent prospect of the temple and other public buildings. He had arrived at the descent of this mount when the multitude around him "began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works which they had seen him perform, saying, Blessed be the King that cometh

in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Thus entering in triumph the city where his prophets had been so often despised, and where he himself had been persecuted and rejected, what were the thoughts that employed his mind? Was he elated with the honours that were paid him? with the applauses of the multitude who scattered branches of the palm tree in his way and exclaimed, "Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord?" Or was he proudly enjoying the triumph thus afforded him over the Scribes and Pharisees, who were ever envying and discouraging every demonstration of the public regard to his sacred person? Or was he dwelling with secret satisfaction on the speedy ruin that was coming on the inhabitants of that devoted city, for their obstinate rejection of his Divine mission? Or, what was a yet more affecting subject, was he absorbed in the contemplation of the awful sufferings which he knew awaited him there within a few days; when he should be despised, and buffeted, and spit upon, and crucified, for the redemption of an ungodly and ungrateful world? No. Such thoughts, however natural, were far removed from the bosom of the compassionate Saviour. He beheld the city; it awakened in his mind many painful reflections; and he wept over it. Not

all the provocations he had hitherto borne, not all the cruelties that were soon to be added to them, could restrain his feelings of pity, when he reflected on the doom that was about to fall on his wilfully blinded countrymen, and uttered the solemn exclamation in the text, which may be thus paraphrased: "Oh, unhappy and devoted city, would that even at length, in this thy last and latest hour of grace, thou wouldst repent and turn to God! Then should thy former rejection of prophets and righteous men even yet have been forgiven! Then would a merciful Saviour even yet have rescued thee from destruction! Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, the long-beloved and favoured city of Jehovah, where his choicest mercies were richly poured out, and his repeated warnings exhibited, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes! O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard! What could have been done more unto my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, why brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof; and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor

digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." Or, in the words that follow the text; "The days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not"—that is, thou didst not lay to heart—"the time of thy visitation." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

But, while the passage under consideration thus leads us to admire the tenderness and compassion of Christ, it should also awaken another train of reflection in our minds. As with the people of Jerusalem, so with each of us; there are things that belong to our eternal peace; a space is given for us to become acquainted with them; too many neglect this opportunity; and to those who do so, a time will come when the things that belong to their peace shall be for ever hid from their eyes. May our meditation on these points be blessed

by the Spirit of God, to excite in us a salutary dread lest we neglect so great salvation; and to lead us to an earnest resolution, by his grace assisting us, to lose no time in applying ourselves to make our calling and election sure.

I. There are things that belong to our eternal peace.—All the trifles of this world will soon pass away; it will be of no concern to us, a few years hence, whether we were young or old, rich or poor, prosperous or afflicted. But there are subjects of never-ending moment: the concerns of our souls, the interests of eternity, will last when all worldly affairs are for ever forgotten. God has been pleased to disclose in his word ample information on these points; and it is necessary for our everlasting safety that we should become acquainted with what he has thus communicated.

The case of the Jews, as described in the text, will shew us the nature of the things that belong to our peace. For, what was the ground of their guilt? What was the message that they refused to receive? It was the message of peace through the death and merits of a crucified Saviour. They wilfully rejected the Lord of life and glory. They felt not their need of him: they would not come unto him that they might have life: they thought themselves safe in an outward profession of religion, and

boasted of their spiritual privileges, while they remained ignorant of God and of themselves, and shewed no desire either to receive the record of his Son, or to submit themselves to his holy and self-denying law. It is thus with too many persons in every age; they may not, indeed, like the Jews, openly reject the Messiah, the Anointed of God, and the Prince of Peace: but they slight his message; they live contentedly in a state in which there is no true safety; they are ignorant of that divinely revealed plan of mercy by which God is reconciled to man, and man to God; they despise the offer of spiritual peace; they are unmindful of the blessings of that peace; they are at war with the Majesty of Heaven, and have no well-grounded hope of God's favour either here or hereafter. In a word, they neglect both the doctrines and the precepts of Christianity: they neither betake themselves to a crucified Saviour for pardon, nor endeavour to fulfil his righteous commands. Yet there is no peace with God in any other way: his language is, Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out; Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; Present your souls and bodies to God, which is your reasonable service; Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one

to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Such are the things that belong to our peace; including all the doctrines and duties of our holy religion; and particularly a grateful reception of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, with a life of faith upon him, and obedience to his requirements.

II. A season is mercifully afforded us to become acquainted with these things.—God bore long with the Jews: he did not cut them off at once, or for their first offence. He gave them a lengthened day of grace, a space for repentance. They had line upon line, precept upon precept: the Messiah himself appeared personally amongst them; his Divine mission was plainly declared by his miracles; he healed their sick, he opened the eyes of the blind, he made the lame to walk and the dead to live. His message of mercy was faithfully and affectionately proclaimed to them. "If any man," said he, "thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "This is the will of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish

but have everlasting life." Such were the constant declarations of the Saviour while upon earth; such his slowness to anger towards an unrelenting race; thus shewing himself to be indeed a God "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

We also, in like manner, have our day of grace. The Lord waiteth that he may have compassion upon us: there is no defect of warning or invitation on his part; he addresses us as in the language of the text; "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; now, while we are in possession of our faculties of mind and body; while our conscience remains capable of impression; while the Holy Spirit continues to strive in our hearts; while the offer of mercy is afforded us, and grace is promised to enable us to embrace it. If we fall short of salvation, we shall have nothing to complain of but our own thoughtlessness and impenitence. The text presents a forcible illustration of God's conduct towards us. How affecting the lamentation of Christ over Jerusalem! "If thou hadst known"—he does not finish the sentence: grief seems to choke his utterance: he weeps for those who wept not for themselves, and even yet would he have received them had they not obstinately turned a deaf ear to his expostulations.

III. We are next to shew that too many persons neglect the opportunity thus afforded of becoming acquainted with the things that belong to their peace.—The Jews notoriously did so: but, alas! theirs is not a solitary instance: the case is common: Oh that it be not our own! The world before the flood were warned by Noah, a preacher of righteousness: during the space of a hundred and twenty years, he proclaimed the approaching judgment: but they neglected the message till their day of grace was past, and they were swept off with irretrievable destruction. The sons of Lot had warning to leave the devoted city of the plain; but they believed not the threatening, and were destroyed in the overthrow. The same awful truth is illustrated by many other examples recorded in Scripture. And is not the fact precisely similar in our own day? Do not too many resemble the invited guests in the parable, who were so busy with their farms and their merchandize, with the business or the amusements of the world, that they disobeyed the gracious summons, and were justly excluded from the benefits intended for them? But it is superfluous to multiply proofs on this part of the subject: we shall therefore proceed to the next point for consideration,—namely,

IV. That, if we neglect the warning so mercifully given us, a time will come when the things

that belong to our peace shall be for ever hid from our eyes. In the case of the Jews, this awful period had now arrived. God had given them up: their hour was past: Jehovah seemed to say to them, "Thou hast forsaken me; thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting." It was indeed long before this sentence was thus finally issued. Often had the Almighty expostulated with them, as in the language of the Prophet: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me: my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee." But now a decree had gone forth similar to that of old,—"I, the Lord, have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it: I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God." The Saviour himself, who had so often pleaded with his unbelieving countrymen, and who even now wept over them as he approached their long-favoured city, and foresaw the impending vengeance, pronounces their doom. The door of mercy is about to be closed: and he proceeds, in the

verses which follow the text, to predict the fatal issue. He had proved by his long forbearance and offers of pardon that he had no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; and he was now to shew, what is no less certain, that his threatenings are not vain, and that it is a fearful thing to fall as an impenitent transgressor into the hands of the living God.

Let us apply this subject to ourselves. Have *we* hitherto rejected the message of Divine mercy? Have we refused to return to a state of obedience to the Saviour? Have we preferred the world or sin to God? And have we hoped, thus living and dying, to escape unpunished? No: it cannot be thus. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" We know not how soon the sentence may go forth; "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" It is not, however, yet too late: "Return to me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Had the Jewish people listened to the warning, and, like Nineveh, repented of

their transgressions, they had not been cut off; for, "At what instant," saith Jehovah, "I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The same consolatory declaration applies to every individual of mankind. The threatenings of God against sinners are not intended to lead men to despair, but to repentance: his goodness also and forbearance are designed to have the same effect. While any relentings of conscience remain, any desire to repair to the cross of the Saviour, and to implore pardon of our justly offended God, our day of grace is not past: there is hope for us even now, even though it were the eleventh hour; for whoso cometh to Christ shall not be cast out. But we know not what another day or hour may bring forth; we know not how soon our conscience may be blinded, our hearts hardened, or death cut us off in our sins. Blessed be God, the things that belong to our peace are not *yet* hid from our eyes: let us then, while it is called to-day, hear his voice, and turn at his invitation; lest, before we are aware, the time arrive when he shall proclaim in his wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest.

SERMON XXIX.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

MATT. v. 20.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

THIS declaration of our Saviour must have appeared to his hearers most extraordinary; for so great was the national veneration of the Jews for the two classes of persons here mentioned, that a proverb was current among them, that, if only two individuals were admitted into heaven, the one would be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee. But if we examine the circumstances of the case, we shall see that there was ample reason for our Lord's declaration; and in the course of our inquiry we shall also learn the nature of that righteousness which alone can qualify us for the enjoyment of heaven. Let us then proceed to examine what was the righteousness of the Scribes and

Pharisees, and in what respect it was defective in the sight of God; and then apply the subject to our own case, as professed disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Scribes were doctors or teachers of the law of Moses; their office was not only to write out copies of the word of God as they might be wanted, and carefully to guard against mistakes in copying a record of such infinite importance, but also to expound and apply its contents for the edification of the people. The Pharisees professed to be strict observers of the law: they affected great sanctity of manners, and zeal for the traditions of their fathers. In the time of our Saviour, most of the Scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees: both parties zealously combined their efforts against the doctrines and mission of our Lord; and on both was pronounced many a fearful woe on account of their pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, and other disguised vices.

The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was defective in various particulars, and especially in the following: that it was grounded upon unscriptural principles; that it originated in unworthy motives; that it was partial, instead of being universal; and external only, instead of flowing from inward holiness and obedience of heart.

1. *It was grounded upon unscriptural principles.* Instead of referring to the unperverted oracles of God as the guide of their lives, the Scribes and Pharisees adopted rules of conduct of their own devising, and some of which were in direct opposition to the precepts of Divine revelation. Our Saviour charges upon them that they transgressed the commandments of God by their traditions. For example, one command of God was, that children should honour their parents; and this was a duty so plainly inculcated that no principle that opposed it could possibly be consistent with the letter or spirit of Divine revelation. But the Pharisees, in order to excuse their covetousness and criminal neglect of their parents when in distress, invented the unscriptural principle, that if they promised to devote to the altar of God what God himself commanded them to bestow for the succour of a necessitous parent, their gift would be accepted, and their undutiful conduct excused. "Thus," says our Lord, "have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions." In vain under such circumstances they professed to worship God, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

2. Their pretended righteousness was also defective, *on account of its originating in unworthy*

motives. An instance of this we have just seen in their unnatural conduct to their parents; in which, while they pretended zeal for the service of God, their real motive was either covetousness, or the vanity of performing an ostentatious act of charity and devotion. Many other instances likewise are on record. They gave alms, and stood praying in the corners of the streets, and disfigured their faces when they fasted, only that they might be seen of men. It was right to give alms, and to pray, and to keep the fasts appointed by the Law of Moses; and to have omitted so doing would have been sinful; but the motives from which the Pharisees performed these acts were utterly corrupt. They sought honour one from another, and not the honour that cometh from God; and so little did they concern themselves about the spring and principle of their actions, that where an outward garb of religion would procure them the same public admiration as the reality, they were willing to substitute the former for the latter. Hence our Lord frequently applies to them the appellation of hypocrites; for their best outward actions were founded upon base motives, such as vanity, self-esteem, or covetousness,—on any thing, in short, but true love to God, and delight in his commandments.

3. Their professed obedience, even when it did not expressly contradict the letter of the

commands of God, fell short of the standard of true righteousness *by being scanty and partial in its application.* They would tithe the smallest herb, or keep up a ceremonial custom, or conform to the dictates of an unimportant tradition, with scrupulous exactness, while they deliberately neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; love to God and love to their neighbour. They had not respect to *all* God's commandments; and they made their professed obedience to some a pretext for breaking others. They exhibited great zeal for the Sabbath, but they devoured widows' houses; they fasted and prayed, but they were neither just nor truly charitable; and if they did not in outward act violate a command, they heeded not that they were inattentive to its real spirit and meaning.

4. But lastly, the root and source of the defectiveness of their righteousness was, *that it was external only, instead of flowing from inward holiness and obedience of heart to God.* Their form of religion was wholly superficial: they were content to cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, while within they were full of extortion and excess. They drew nigh to God with their mouths, and honoured him with their lips, but their hearts were far from him. They were whited sepulchres, which appeared beautiful outward, but within were full of dead

men's bones and all uncleanness. Their faces were disfigured with fasting, but their souls were not humbled on account of their sins; their lips uttered the language of prayer, but they felt no true penitence of heart, no gratitude to God for his mercies, no sense of their spiritual necessities, no desire for the pardon of their transgressions. They did not consider the spiritual character of God's law, which our Saviour explains so fully in this discourse. If they did not commit theft, or murder, or adultery, they viewed it as no sin to indulge in dispositions, and to throw themselves in the way of temptations, which would naturally lead to those crimes. Yet, amidst all, far from being humbled on account of the defectiveness of their character, they regarded themselves, and expected that others should regard them, as persons of eminent sanctity: they boasted of their virtues; they thanked God that they were not as other men; and they depended upon their own false and worthless righteousness for acceptance with their omniscient Creator.

But it is very clear, that a righteousness such as has been described could not be pleasing to Him who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins. It failed in every particular which characterises the obedience which God requires. It was hollow and superficial; a mere name, a

form, a ceremony; not the dictate of a filial spirit, but a servile routine of heartless observances; not springing from a principle of love to God and reverence for his laws, but only to serve unworthy and sinful ends. The word of God abounds in severe reproofs against such vain and hypocritical pretensions to religion.

We need then a righteousness far above that of the Scribes and Pharisees before we can enter into the kingdom of God. Now, there are two senses in which the word *righteousness* is used in Scripture, in connexion with the justification and salvation of mankind. In one of these senses Christ "is made unto us righteousness:" we are justified freely by faith in him, without any claim of merit; and hence this righteousness is called "the righteousness of faith," and, with reference to its Author, "the righteousness of God." This, and this only, is our title to heaven: in point of merit, we must utterly renounce our own righteousness; we must confess and feel ourselves to be miserable sinners, justly deserving God's wrath and condemnation, and unable, by any goodness of our own, to purchase the rewards due only to perfect obedience. To attempt to justify ourselves in the sight of God, to extenuate our sins or magnify our supposed virtues before him, would be the height of arrogance and folly. Our only hope must be in his free mercy in

Christ Jesus; our only petition, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." In this sense of the word, not only the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but of every member of the human race, since the fall of Adam, is wholly defective, and unable to stand the scrutiny of Divine justice.

But there is another sense of the word in which we may, and must, personally become partakers of what is implied in the term "righteousness" before we can be admitted to the kingdom of heaven; namely, that holiness of heart and life "without which no man shall see the Lord." It is in this view that the word is to be considered in the text; which does not relate immediately to our title to heaven by the death and merits of Christ, but to our meetness for it, by a newness of nature, a change of heart, effected in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, and accompanied by the fruits of righteousness in our character and conduct. In this sense, as well as in our trust in the merits of our Redeemer, and not in whole or in part in any supposed merit of our own, must our religion exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Here then is a wide field for self-examination. Does our religion exceed that of the hypocrite and the formalist? Is it grounded on Scriptural

principles? Does it flow from Scriptural motives? Does it extend universally to all God's commands? Has it its root in the heart, as the offspring of faith and love, and the parent of holiness, obedience, and good works? Some, alas! of those who call themselves disciples of Jesus Christ, fall short even of the Scribes and Pharisees themselves. They have as little of the outward decencies as of the inward purity of religion. They practise no self-denial; they neither pray nor give alms; they shew no reverence for the word of God, and neither in the letter nor the spirit keep his commandments. Of such, the sin and danger are too plain, and admitted by all, to need that we should at present dwell upon the subject. But it is not enough that we escape this open licentiousness of character; we must go much further if we would be right at last. Our righteousness must exceed not only that of the avowed infidel or profligate, who indeed profess none, but also that of the Scribe or the Pharisee, of the mere decent observer of outward moralities and the forms of religion. We must be new creatures, transformed in the spirit of our minds, and renewed after the image of Him who has created us, and called us to newness of life in the Gospel of his Son. If our religion does not exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, our guilt will be even greater than theirs, because

we have had clearer information and more exalted privileges. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" We are not taught, as the Jews were, through the medium of outward rites and ceremonies; but "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." We are not under the rigour of the Levitical law, but under the new covenant of grace and mercy. Gratitude, therefore, as well as duty, should bind us to seek a complete conformity to the will of God. And, besides this, we have the gracious promise of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten our understandings, to purify our will, and to renew our hearts. We are not left alone and unbefriended in our arduous contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil; for if we pray for strength from above, it will be afforded to us according to our necessities. And, to complete all, we have the promise of a crown of glory that fadeth not away, reserved for the Christian in that blessed world where nothing unrighteous or unholy can obtain admission. Let us then fear lest we come short of that promise; and let us ever keep in mind the necessary qualification for the blessedness of heaven; neither deceiving our-

selves by trusting to our own righteousness as the ground of our hope, which must be placed on the merits of our Saviour only; nor, on the other hand, thinking ourselves in the way for the attainment of the promise while we are destitute of that holiness which alone can make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

SERMON XXX.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE AND SACRIFICE.

1 PET. ii. 21.

Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.

OUR Saviour is represented to us throughout Scripture in a two-fold aspect; namely, to use the words of our church, as a *sacrifice for sin*, and also *an ensample of godly life*. Practically to unite these two, constitutes the purity of Christian doctrine, and the excellence of the Christian life. To view the Redeemer as our Sacrifice, without endeavouring to imitate his Example, would lead to a false and unholy security; while to view him only as a Pattern for our imitation, without remembering that he is also the Sacrifice for our sins, the High Priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, the merciful Redeemer who ever liveth to make intercession for us, would naturally incline us either to self-sufficiency

and spiritual pride on the one hand, or, on the other, to terror, and apprehension, and despair. Let us endeavour, by the blessing of God, to unite the two, while we contemplate the great High Priest of our profession,

First, As our Sacrifice.

Secondly, As our Example.

First, then, let us view the Redeemer AS OUR SACRIFICE; the great Sin-offering that was to atone for our transgressions. To contemplate him only as a pattern of righteousness, is infinitely too little. He left the right hand of the Majesty on high, he assumed our nature, he wept, and suffered, and expired, not merely to reform sinful man by his example, but also to redeem him by his blood. He was a Prophet; but he was also more than a prophet: he was a High Priest, to make upon the cross, by his one oblation of himself, once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He is the pattern for our conduct; but he is also *the propitiation for our sins.*

The text briefly points out two most important circumstances, connected with the sacrifice of Christ:—first, that *he suffered;* and, secondly, that his sufferings were *for us.*

1. *He suffered.*—Trace his progress from the

manger to the cross, and see if ever there were sorrow like unto his sorrow. Without respite or intermission, he travelled on through life in the path of care, and anxiety, and affliction. In his very infancy he was despised and rejected of the Bethlehemites, and his life was sought by Herod. He was afterwards tempted by Satan, subjected to hunger and thirst, and was without a place where to lay his head. At length he was sold by one who called himself a friend and disciple; he was apprehended, arraigned, scourged, and condemned. To conclude the whole, he was led as an outcast from society without the walls of the city, to expire upon the ignominious cross, in company with two malefactors.

The sufferings of his soul were, doubtless, even greater than those of his body. It is said in the Gospel, *his soul was heavy.* He endured the contradiction of sinners. He beheld men wilfully rejecting his salvation, and persecuting the Lord of life and glory. His very miracles he heard attributed to the agency of Satan, and his holy doctrines condemned as blasphemy against God. Often was he "grieved at the hardness of the people's heart." As righteous Lot was vexed at the filthy conversation of the wicked, so—but in infinitely higher proportion —was the Redeemer wounded through his

whole life, by the sins, the rebellion, the ingratitude of mankind, and even of his disciples themselves.

But who shall attempt to describe the sufferings he endured? Who shall tell the awful import of those words, *his soul was made an offering for sin?* As the blessings which he lived and died to purchase were such as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, and which it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive, so also were the sufferings of him who procured them. His soul became exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Thrice he entreated his Father, *if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* At the extremity of his affliction an angel descended to support him, for he appeared ready to sink beneath the weight of sorrows that were laid upon him. Even his heavenly Father seemed to forsake him; and what that part of his sufferings must have been, no created being can conceive. If the presence and favour of God, even in the comparatively small measure in which they are enjoyed upon earth, could support the Apostles in every possible affliction, and make martyrs at the stake express a joy unspeakable and full of glory, how unutterable must be that blessedness which our Lord himself had shared from eternity with his Father; and consequently how immeasurable

must have been the extent of his sufferings, when he felt, for the first time, that bitter desertion which caused him to exclaim, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* He uttered no complaint in the other part of his agonies; the scoffs and taunts of men, the tortures of the body, the insincerity of professed friends, the thorns, the scourge, the cross, were nothing compared with the desertion of Him whose presence is fulness of joy, and whose displeasure, even in mitigated anger, and but for a moment, is the deepest woe that man or angel can endure.

2. But why this scene of desertion and distress? Why did the Lord of heaven and earth thus condescend *to take upon him the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of man, and, being found in fashion as a man, to humble himself, and to submit to death, even the death of the cross?* Why this exchange of life for death, of joy for sorrow, of the crown of heaven for the cross of Calvary? He suffered *for us.* He loved us, and *therefore* gave himself for us. No man took his life from him; but he willingly laid it down for our salvation. He could, in the midst of his anguish, have prayed to his Father, who would have sent him more than ten legions of angels; yet he submitted to the dispensation—he willingly completed the work that was given him to do. He was even straitened till it was

accomplished. He voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The way in which our salvation was thus accomplished, besides being fraught with the greatest benefits to mankind, was well suited to display the wisdom, love, and justice of God. Justice might, indeed, have inflicted punishment upon us without a remedy; and Mercy we might have thought could freely pardon the offender without satisfaction; but who can propose any other way than that actually adopted, by which *mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness and peace might kiss each other?* The reason of this is evident; for by nature we were children of wrath — we were enemies in our mind to God by wicked works. Banishment from the Divine presence, with eternal punishment of soul and body, was our just portion. In this state, salvation, if conferred at all, must necessarily be a free gift; not of works, but of grace. For who shall dare to challenge reward? Who can see in his past conduct, or anticipate in his future, any thing but what must add to his demerits, instead of purchasing his pardon? Dead in trespasses and sins, man, by nature, is incapable of saving himself if he were willing, and unwilling if he were able. He is contented with his unhappy lot, and, but for the mercy of God, would not even awake to a sense of his

condition, till the time for remedying it was for ever past.

Under these circumstances, the Redeemer said, *Lo I come*. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. He suffered for us, that we might not suffer eternally. The sacrifice was accepted; and henceforth the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers. By faith in this sacrifice we become justified; and, being justified, we have peace with God. All the privileges of the Gospel, all the blessings of time, all the beatitude of eternity thus become ours; for God having given his Son for us, will he not also with him freely give us all things?

Thus have we contemplated Christ as our Sacrifice.—But is this all? Did he die only to deliver us from hell, without making us meet for heaven? Did he expiate our sins, that we might continue to live in them? God forbid! The farthest from it possible: He died for us expressly that we who live through his death should not henceforth live to ourselves, but unto him that loved us and gave himself for us. Indeed, St. Peter, in the words that almost immediately succeed the text, teaches us, that Christ *bare our sins in his own body on the tree, in order that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness*. To this end his own holy and spotless life is at once the best direction and

the most powerful motive. Let us, then, contemplate the Redeemer,

SECONDLY, AS OUR EXAMPLE. — From a sense of guilt, and a conviction of the consequences of sin, many persons have a confused and half-formed desire to be justified before God, and to have their sins pardoned, who look no farther; but hope for these blessings while they live the life and die the death of the ungodly. They have no adequate idea of the necessity and nature of repentance, of true conversion of heart, and progress in holiness, as well as a mere general belief in the mercy of God exhibited in a Redeemer. This fatal error arises in part from not practically viewing our blessed Lord in the second aspect under consideration; or, at least, may be best checked by such a view. The object of Christ in the great work which we have considered, was to frame from a guilty and sinful race a new and holy generation who should live to his praise and glory upon earth, and circle his throne, rejoicing in eternal holiness, in heaven. To complete this stupendous scheme of mercy, he not only purchased eternal blessedness for us, but marked by his own footsteps every part of the road that leads to its enjoyment. He left us an example, that we should walk in his steps.

There is a point of view in which this consi-

deration appears peculiarly awful. For nothing is more certain than that a very large part of the world do *not* follow, or wish to follow, in the path which the Redeemer trod, and consequently have no scriptural reason to expect that they shall arrive whither he is gone. There is unspeakable comfort in the death of Christ, but it is to those only who have practically learned from his death themselves to die to sin and to live to righteousness. This circle shuts out the impenitent world, under all its aspects. It excludes not only the grossly profane, but the hypocrite, the pharisee, and the careless inconsistent professor of religion. It contains those only who are so impressed with the love of the Saviour in suffering for them as to desire in return to have his image ever before their eyes, as the holy model of their imitation, as well as the source of all their hopes. The Apostle, in the chapter preceding that from which the text is taken, speaks of Christians as *redeemed from their vain conversation.* Let us not, then, delude ourselves. If we find the love of sin and the example of sinners deliberately stronger in our hearts than the love and example of the Saviour, we have, as yet, no true proof of our interest in his merits; we cannot have entered with genuine gratitude and affection into the great subject of his cross and passion, or have felt that love which

constrained the holy Apostles to tread in the blessed footsteps of their Divine Lord.

The Christian is bound by his sacred profession to aim high. It is true he may not, and indeed he cannot, in this life, attain perfection; yet his *wish* and *effort*, in humble trust upon the grace and Spirit of God, will be, to be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect. The life of Christ, with the exception of the miraculous parts, or those which respected his peculiar work and offices, will furnish a constant exemplar of every grace and virtue in which the believer is commanded to abound. And as example is usually more influential than precept, it becomes of high importance to make this bright Pattern the daily object of our reverential regard.

And what part is there of our Lord's conduct which does not furnish us with practical instruction? Behold his prayerfulness, his early and ardent devotion of spirit, and his submission in every thing to the will of his heavenly Father. Imitate, also, his constant zeal in the concerns of eternity; his diligent redeeming of time; his kindness towards his friends, his forbearance towards his enemies, his unwearied services to both. Observe that prudence and discretion which marked his whole conduct, and either prevented his good being evil spoken of, or at

least made the malice of the evil tongue fall harmless to the ground. Go on to emulate that heavenly-mindedness, that deadness to the pomps, vanities, and evil customs of the world, which marked his whole conduct. Forget not his benevolence and disinterestedness of character; his uniform love for the souls and bodies of men; his humility and condescension; his meekness and clemency; his patience and compassion, and all the long catalogue of holy graces which were conspicuous throughout his life.

To see more accurately the perfection of our Lord's character as an Example, we might proceed to mark the signal *union* of the eminent qualities which have been enumerated. All the virtues of the Saviour were intimately blended. He did not take up a few detached doctrines, or a few favourite graces, to the exclusion or disparagement of others. He united in his own person all that was good and all that was endearing; all that was just and all that was merciful; all that attracted friendship and all that secured esteem.—It is this general union of excellencies which particularly demands the imitation of the Christian, in order that he may not take a narrow and contracted view of his duties and obligations; that he may not indulge any sin under the garb of a virtue, and that, in avoiding one fault, he may not revert to the opposite; a propensity which the experience

of every watchful Christian bears witness is but too ready to occur.

The particular part, however, of our Lord's example which the text more especially exhibits for imitation, is his patience under suffering. St. Peter was addressing religious servants, who were subjected to persecution for conscience' sake. With eminent propriety he points them to Him who *suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.* The allusion, however, extends far beyond the particular case of those to whom the words were more immediately addressed; for every Christian is called to suffer, and needs both an Example and a Comforter in his afflictions. Our Lord and his Apostles do not tell us that the path to heaven is free from fears and sorrows; on the contrary, they repeatedly inform us, that it *is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God.* They boldly reveal every difficulty and every discouraging circumstance. But then, in return, they point to the example of Him who bare infinitely more on our account than we can ever be called upon to endure; they add numerous promises and blessings to cheer us in all the struggles of life; and they teach us, that at length we shall be *more than conquerors through Him that loved us and gave himself for us.*—Such considerations, under the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit, will become

a powerful assistance to us, in conforming to the will, and following the example, of our blessed Redeemer.

The perfection of our Lord's example, as our pattern in affliction, is very evident, both from the *greatness* of his sufferings and his *patience* under them. Whatever may be our afflictions, either in mind, body, or estate, they cannot be so great as those of our Divine Master. Yet how unconquerable was his patience! how calm and uniform his spirit of resignation! No murmur escaped his lips. His prayer was, *Father, not my will, but thine be done!* And thus he left us an example that we should follow his steps; thus he taught us in patience to possess our souls, and, both by active duty and submissive resignation, to follow him in the path of everlasting life. Let, then, the mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus, being comforted with knowing that if we follow him, and suffer awhile with him here, we shall reign with him for ever hereafter.

SERMON XXXI.

IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING GOD IN OUR THOUGHTS.

PSALM X. 4.

God is not in all his thoughts.

THIS is one of the most concise and expressive descriptions possible of the wicked man. We might, indeed, point to his immoral acts, to his unholy deportment, to his evil thoughts and words, as marks of his state; but here we have one broad and general test of his character —"God is not in his thoughts." Wicked men may not be all equally inclined to the same sin: their education and habits may be very different: they may be high or low, rich or poor, decorous or profligate: but, amidst all these and various other points of difference, we shall uniformly find that in one respect they agree, — they are not habitually impressed with a sense of the presence, the power, and the majesty of God; they do not live as under his immediate inspection and controul; heaven and hell, death and eternity, are not the great

subjects that occupy and engross their souls. In like manner, true Christians may differ in numerous respects: their knowledge, their faith, their practical experience, may be very various: but in *this* they uniformly agree,—that God is in their thoughts; that though they may not view all subjects alike, and may even contend respecting matters of subordinate interest, they yet possess in common one fixed, general, pervading sentiment of the presence and inspection of the Almighty. They do not, and cannot, dismiss from their thoughts those supremely important subjects which relate to God and the unseen state; and they view the care of their soul, and the securing the inheritance of heaven as the great object of their concern in this fleeting and perishable world.

The heart of the wicked is the only place in the creation of God, from which, if we may so speak, the Creator is banished. "If we go up to heaven, he is there; if we go down to hell, he is there also." In the one, he is ever present by his mercy; and in the other, by his anger. Angels would not forget him, and condemned spirits cannot. Even upon earth, also, the heart of the righteous is open to his reception. So that it is the sinner only who can put away the thought of God; and speak, and live, and feel as though his being were but a fable. The heart of such a man is a blank, as respects the sensible

presence of the Almighty: there is no throne prepared for his reception, there is no anxiety to invite his influences. *God is not in all his thoughts.*

Among the ideas which the words of the text appear to suggest, as connected with this subject, we may inquire,

First, into the causes of such a state of mind;
Secondly, into the evils resulting from it; and
Thirdly, into the method of overcoming it.

First. The causes of such a state of mind penetrate much deeper than may at first sight appear. When we consider man as he came from the hands of his Maker—in the likeness of God; perfect in soul and body; with a heart fixed in love, and gratitude, and admiration upon the great Author of all his blessings; with whom, as well as with the whole celestial world, he held daily and hourly communion—we must confess that it could be no slight cause that has effected so complete a change. To pass from constant and delightful intercourse to total forgetfulness and indifference, surely could not have happened without some marked and important step to point out the first defection. And this we find to have been in fact the case. It is nothing temporary or accidental that causes the forgetfulness of which the Psalmist complains: the evil is general and radical. It has its source in our original apostacy; it extends

to us all by nature; no man is free from its influence. From the moment in which Adam plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, a desire to avoid the presence of God entered his soul; and a similar desire has ever since characterised his posterity. Thus we are said to live "without God in the world." We are so deeply altered and depraved, that He who is the First and the Last, the great and glorious Being who inhabiteth the praises of eternity, no longer dwells by nature in the contaminated regions of our hearts. Other gods have had dominion over us. Our lusts and passions, our evil tempers and unholy pleasures, absorb those thoughts which ought to be devoted to the Most High. The fall of man has destroyed that image in which we were created: the understanding, being darkened and perplexed, no longer comprehends the Divine nature; the affections, alienated and depraved, no longer love it: the judgment no longer sets it up as the great pattern and model for our imitation. In a word, though God is ever present with us, though every thing around us testifies his power and his mercy, though in Him we live and move and have our being, yet, such is our character since the entrance of sin into the world that we are dead to his perfections and insensible of his presence. We do not perceive him, because we do not love to do so. The

spiritual ear is deaf, and the spiritual eye blind; the heart is cold, and the perceptions are deadened.

Thus, in a general point of view, may we trace the thoughtlessness of mankind with respect to God, to the depraved state of our nature, as one of the unhappy consequences of the Fall. But subordinate to this primary and leading cause there are individual causes, which, though but results of the former, become in their turn new and fruitful causes of the same effect. The constant pressure of worldly concerns, even when lawful, tends to banish God from our thoughts. The objects that surround us, though small and of little moment in themselves, yet by their nearness and number greatly impede our apprehension of the Almighty. Every thought that would ascend to heaven is checked in its flight; and in the fatigue and pressure of daily events we are too much occupied and interested to spend one reflection upon Him who gave us the very power to think at all, and to whom we are indebted for all the blessings we enjoy.

But mere inattention, or urgent worldly employment, is not the *whole* cause why God is not more in the hearts of men. They *wilfully* and *deliberately* banish him from their thoughts. They are *anxious* to forget him. The consciousness of his presence gives them pain; so that they are for ever contriving new methods of losing

those salutary reflections which silence and solitude sometimes create in their minds. The reason of this is, that they do not truly *love* God. What we love, is always welcome to our thoughts; and "where our treasure is, our hearts will be likewise." The angels, whose love to God is perfect, desire no other theme for their celestial meditations. The spirits of the just made perfect, who encircle the Eternal Throne rejoicing in light and life and never-ending felicity, praise God, because they are deeply penetrated with love and gratitude to him for his mercies. And thus also, mankind, were their love and gratitude equally sincere, would cheerfully and spontaneously make Him the great subject of their thoughts, and praises, and conversations. It would require no argument or excitement to cause us to think upon God: to do so would be as much our delight as it is our duty. We should begin, continue, and end every thing with Him. We could not live happy without a consciousness of his presence, or find repose but in his favour and parental superintendance. How greatly, then, must our nature be depraved! and how direful must be those causes which have thus ejected the King of kings from that important part of his dominions, the human heart! "How is the gold become dim! how is the fine gold changed!" What a picture does mankind present, when

we thus contrast his original with his actual condition; that holy, happy state, in which his Creator was his father and his friend, ever nigh to support and comfort him; with that in which "God is not in all his thoughts," and in which, consequently, he can know nothing of true happiness here, or be qualified for the enjoyment of heaven hereafter.

Secondly. Having thus ascertained the *causes* of this awful condition of mind, let us view the evils which result from it.—But these it is impossible fully to enumerate; for, in fact, all the vices that exists among mankind arise from their not having God in their thoughts. Even our courts of judicature, in accounting for the crimes which it comes within their province to investigate and punish, attribute them to the sinner's "not having the fear of God before his eyes, and being moved by the instigation of the devil." Did men seriously think upon God, they would not dare to sin as they too often do. To realize the idea of Him who made, preserves, and governs the world; of Him who weighs actions and motives; who searches hearts, who punishes sin, and "brings to light the hidden works of darkness;" would be a strong safeguard against temptation. Yet there is even a stronger than this—namely, to view Him as He is fully revealed in his word; not only as a

Creator and a moral Governor, but as a God of kindness and compassion, of pity and forgiveness;—to view the Father as giving his Son to die for us; the Son as undertaking and performing the arduous task; and the Holy Spirit as enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting us by his gracious influences. To have God thus in our thoughts in all his love and mercy, as exhibited in the Cross of Christ; and to feel our souls duly impressed with a sense of his inestimable Gift, is the most powerful dissuasive from sin. To the absence, therefore, or the infrequency of these affecting considerations, or to the want of bringing them home to the conscience and rendering them practical, must be ascribed the great and universal prevalence of iniquity. Would there be so much practical unbelief in the world, if men seriously reflected on the nature and attributes of God? Would there be so much impiety, evil passion, falsehood, and blasphemy, if they duly reverenced Him who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" The contemplation of his wisdom and goodness, his justice and mercy, his power and glory, if sincere and habitual, would greatly tend to excite adoration, to awaken a holy fear, to strengthen our faith, and to increase our love and gratitude. The want of this consideration produces the contrary effects. We become careless and impenitent;

we neglect prayer; we feel little awe of God; and hence we are easily seduced into open and gross iniquity. In fact, we are not safe an instant longer than our souls are possessed with elevated, and reverential, and admiring views of God. The first inattention to the duty of "remembering our Creator in the days of our youth" leads to "hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandment;" till at length this culpable inattention—or rather this studious exclusion—becomes so confirmed that all the promises and warnings, the mercies and the judgments of God, fail to awaken the heart to holy impressions. As the cares and avocations of the world thicken around us, the evil advances; till at length sickness and death arrive, and plunge the sinner into the immediate presence of Him whom it has been the main object of his life to forget. The result of such an entrance into eternity will appear in these awful words: "I know ye not—depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" As the sinner would not retain God in his thoughts while upon earth, so his just punishment will consist in being for ever disowned and banished from the presence of God in heaven.

Thirdly. We are to consider the method of overcoming this unhappy state of character.

In order to do so, it is necessary to feel the importance of the duty. The larger part of mankind do not conceive it an object of any moment to think upon God; they are not impressed with a sense of their own interest in the subject. But where there is really a desire to perform the duty, it may not be unwelcome to suggest some reflections, calculated to assist us in so doing.

1. In the first place, then, let us learn to contemplate the Almighty in *the magnitude of his terrors*.—There is a vague, general, indifferent, and almost unmeaning way, in which men are accustomed to think and speak of God. This rather lowers than heightens our conceptions respecting him. We ought, on the contrary, to endeavour to realize his presence, by prominently setting before ourselves his attributes and perfections; by dwelling upon that power, that justice, that omniscience, one serious thought of which must engross the attention, and affect the heart. A criminal feels no difficulty in keeping before his eyes the person and character of his judge, or a courtier that of his prince. In like manner, *we*, if we thus contemplated the Almighty, should not find that the theme was incapable of awakening and commanding our attention. On the contrary, every faculty would be absorbed with fear and admiration. Seriously to view our-

selves in our true light, as frail, sinful, and impotent creatures; and then to revert to that holy character of God, which is utterly opposed to all our ways and threatens our eternal punishment, could not but excite thought and inquiry. Thus viewed, the contemplation of God becomes supremely interesting. It is not a neutral subject; it is one calculated most forcibly to arrest the mind of man, to stop the sinner in his heedless course, and to fix itself upon the conscience by the most powerful associations. The chief wonder is, that, knowing that God exists, and believing in those awful attributes which render him "a consuming fire," we should be able to expel him for a moment from our thoughts.

2. But, in the second place, let us view God in the *abundance of his love*.—The former aspect is calculated to excite salutary awe and attention; but it by no means calms the heart, or renders the contemplation of the Godhead inviting and welcome; and it is on this very account, namely, by reason of the uneasiness excited by this view of the Almighty, that men fail to reflect upon him. But in this new and equally appropriate aspect, He becomes an object on which we may gaze without terror; for His perfections and attributes are as attractive as they are majestic. "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto them," is of all possible themes, that which is best calculated to soothe and tranquillize the heart of a conscious sinner, who is anxious for pardon and mercy. Here the spiritual eye may repose, without being terrified by the awful glories of the Godhead. Thus we learn to unite our own interest with the contemplation of God. We behold Him as exhibited in the face of Jesus Christ; who, by assuming our nature, and becoming a High Priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, has rendered the Godhead capable of being viewed through a medium which we can better understand; and has so united the beams of mercy with the attributes of justice, that we learn to contemplate Him who is Almighty, and inflexibly just, as a reconciled Father, and an all-gracious Friend. Let us then cultivate those affections towards God which may render our reflections upon him grateful and interesting. If we learn thus to connect our own personal salvation, our happiness here and hereafter, with the character of God, as revealed in the person of his Son, we shall not desire to be freed from his presence, but rather shall keep him ever in our thoughts, in all the endearing relations in which he has been pleased to reveal himself to us. We shall thus advance in love to him; and this love will lead to new and more en-

dearing contemplations. We shall also be increasingly conformed to his image; we shall grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; till at length, having made Him the great object of our meditations and delight upon earth, we shall be translated into his kingdom in heaven, where we shall become perfect in knowledge, and see and know even as we are seen and known.

SERMON XXXII.

ST. PAUL READY TO BE OFFERED.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 6—8.

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.

WHEN that venerable reformer, Melancthon, was asked, upon his death-bed, whether there was any thing more that he desired, he is said to have replied, "Nothing else—but heaven." How happy such a frame of mind! to have seen the vanity and folly of every thing in comparison of religion; to have been detached in spirit from the sins and pursuits of the world; to have had the affections fixed upon God; and to be able to say, with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee!" Yet, great

as is this privilege, it is often the blessed lot of the advanced Christian. This was remarkably the case with the Apostle in the text; and though at our first setting out on a religious course such high attainments may appear far beyond our reach, yet if we steadily persevere, in humble dependence upon the Spirit of God, and in the diligent use of the means which he has mercifully provided for our spiritual edification, there is scriptural reason to hope that even the weakest of us may arrive at a similar, if not an equally triumphant, degree of Christian experience. Our duty is "to follow on to know the Lord;" and in so doing, God will be faithful to his promises; he will comfort and support us in trouble; he will raise us when we are drooping; and even in death we shall be more than conquerors, through Him that loved us and gave himself for us. St. Paul himself bears witness that the blessings which he describes in the text were not confined only to a few eminent saints or martyrs, but were to be the lot of Christians in every age; for he adds, *And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*.

In order, then, to animate our hearts in the pursuit of such inestimable blessings, and to teach us in what manner they may be obtained, we shall consider,

First, The Apostle's confidence.

Secondly, The considerations on which it was grounded.

First. The Apostle's confidence.

Death is an idea at which, above all others, human nature trembles. It is the event that rends asunder the soul and body, which from our very infancy have been inseparable companions. That union is the foundation of our earthly enjoyments; and the chief effort of mankind through life is to preserve it. For this purpose we toil in order to procure nourishment, we clothe ourselves against the inclemencies of the seasons, we watch every symptom of decay and dissolution, and endeavour, by unceasing efforts, to avoid the fatal hour which we feel is rapidly approaching, and which we cannot long escape.

Now, view the wicked man in sight of this great and dreaded enemy, Death: behold his terrors—listens to his groans—mark his apprehensions—hear his doleful exclamations, his accents of agony and despair! And when you have thus witnessed the terrors of death to the wicked; when you have beheld how anxiously its approach is dreaded; and have seen in imagination the sinner shuddering at its appearance;—turn from so awful a scene, and hear the Apostle exclaim, *I am ready to be offered,*

and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.

Here was no trembling anxiety—no fearful listening for an unwelcome messenger. The Apostle was composed and "ready;" he was prepared by the grace of God for the journey on which he was about to enter; his loins were girded, and his lamp was burning. He was not like a malefactor, who, when about to proceed to punishment, is asked whether he is ready, and from mere hardness replies in the affirmative, while he would give worlds, had he them in his grasp, to escape the hour;—but he was ready, as the friend to meet the friend, as the child to return to the bosom of his parent, as the shipwrecked mariner to revisit his native land the moment the vessel shall appear which is to bear him from some desert rock, where he has been stranded, to the haven of peace and safety, at which he longs to arrive.

The very term which St. Paul employs, indicates his cheerful acquiescence in his approaching dissolution. It was a *departure*—a calm and hopeful passage from earth to heaven—a departure from sin and sorrow to holiness and eternal joy—a departure from all that had wearied him during life—an

escape from the pains of infancy, the snares of youth, the troubles of maturer years—a departure especially from that sinful nature which had made him in agony of spirit exclaim, *Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* He was not as a vessel torn from its moorings by a tempest—carried out to sea, without rudder, or provisions, or compass—the sport of winds and waves, and liable every moment to be overset in the mighty deep. No: his was a *departure*—the day was calm; the hour was fixed; the anchor was weighed; the sails were set; the destined haven was in view — the vessel was about to glide peacefully over the opposing tide; its passage was to be safe and speedy; and it was shortly to anchor in the wished-for port.

But it may be asked, Might not the readiness of the Apostle be nothing but a vain boast, which would vanish the moment death arrived? Many men seem willing to meet danger while it is distant; can speak calmly of troubles that may never occur; have no particular fear of death itself, so long as it does not come immediately in sight; but the moment it seems at hand, they are terrified, their confidence vanishes, and they are driven away in their wickedness, without a ray of hope in their death.

But such was not the case with the Apostle; for, after having said that he was ready to be

offered, he added, that the time of his departure was *at hand*. It was not the boast of a coward, who marches across the field of battle with vain exultation while the enemy is out of sight, and flees the moment he approaches; but it was the deliberate triumph of a champion in the very face of his adversary. His departure was not doubtful or distant, but "at hand." He heard, as it were, the sound of the wheels and the rattling of the horse-hoofs that announced the approach of the king of terrors. He was writing from Rome, whither he had been sent to take his trial for the testimony of his Redeemer; he was a prisoner in chains, and in imminent danger of losing his life. His persecutors were inflamed with malice. He had been brought the first time before the persecuting emperor, Nero; and was probably about soon to appear again, to receive the sentence of a cruel death. It is generally agreed that this very chapter was the last he ever wrote. His triumph, therefore, was not a vain boast, which the first approach of real danger might silence: it was the deliberate confidence of true faith: it was built upon that Rock of ages, which can resist every storm; and therefore it stood firm amidst all the terrors of approaching dissolution, and the pains of martyrdom itself. How powerful must have been that principle which could thus support this holy man at such a

season! which could convert all the terrors of a violent and ignominious death, into a peaceable departure or release!

Secondly. This leads us to examine into the considerations on which his confidence was grounded. It could be no sandy foundation which supported such a structure. It was grounded on the consideration that to him death was no longer an enemy; or if an enemy, an enemy vanquished, and rendered incapable of doing him any real injury. He knew in whom he had believed, and that through the Captain of his salvation, he should be more than conqueror even over this last and most formidable adversary. He therefore triumphed in faith and hope, knowing that to him death was but the gate of entrance to a blissful immortality.

The text affords *two* considerations on which the Apostle's confidence was founded:—the FIRST, was *the free nature of salvation through Jesus Christ;* for he says, *There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day;* the SECOND was *the practical evidence which he possessed of being interested in that salvation;* namely, the fact of his having been enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure to the end. Let us touch upon each of these ideas.

1. In the first place, then, the Apostle placed

all his trust in the freeness of salvation as the gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.—He assumed no merit to himself; for this crown was to be given, not to *him* only, or men *like* him, but to *all* them that love the appearing of the Redeemer. He constantly pleads for the freedom of pardon and salvation, unconnected with human desert or virtue. He did not pen a single Epistle, in which he does not almost constantly refer to this great and fundamental truth. For example, in the very opening of the Epistle from which the text is taken, we find him attesting *that God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.* Indeed, feeling, as he most deeply did, the sinfulness of his nature and practice; viewing himself as the chief of sinners, and knowing that in his flesh dwelt no good thing; what plea could he have for mercy, but the death and merits of a Redeemer? and how could he support the thoughts of his eternal change, but through faith in his name? It was the consideration that the crown of righteousness was *a gift* free and unmerited—not of works, lest any man should boast, but of grace alone—that raised St. Paul to this exalted pitch of holy confidence. He knew that he had destroyed himself, but that in God was his help. He had nothing to purchase salvation,

but he was willing to accept it as God has appointed it to be received,—by faith in Him who died for us, and who, in conquering death, conquered it even for the weakest and humblest of his disciples.

2. Yet, as we have seen, there was a second and most important consideration which St. Paul brings forward. He knew that it was possible for a person to be self-deceived; to be confidently expecting this crown of righteousness while he had no scriptural evidence of being interested in the blessing. He therefore begins to examine himself whether he is in the faith; well knowing that to profess triumph over death where there is no evidence of true conversion to God, is but self-deception. Hence he endeavoured to ascertain the real state of his heart and affections. And while he speaks of the eternal crown of righteousness as the free gift of the righteous Judge, he derives the hope that he is personally interested in the blessing from the practical consideration that he had "fought the good fight of faith;" and that henceforth there was laid up for him this crown of glory.

Let us, then, bring this subject home to our own case, by inquiring whether *we* are fighting the good fight of faith, and endeavouring to lay hold of eternal life. Are we running the

race set before us in the Gospel? Is religion with us more than a mere name to live while we are dead? Are our hearts deeply affected by reason of our sins? Are we placing our whole trust and dependence in Jesus Christ as our Saviour? Are we turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Are we anxiously endeavouring to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Are we endeavouring to grow in love to God, and in a desire to keep his commandments? Do we evidence the tempers and dispositions which become the Christian character? Are we exerting ourselves to discharge the duties of our high calling, in our several stations in society? Are we endeavouring, as masters or servants, as parents or children, as brothers or sisters, and in every other relationship of life, to act from a principle of love to God, and as being always in his sight? Do we feel increasing regard for religion; for the word of God and the affairs of eternity? Do we cultivate a spirit of prayer and humility? Are we anxious above all things for the salvation of our souls; and are we studying to learn, and

endeavouring to practise, the will of God relative to that great subject?—From the answers which our consciences give to these and similar questions, we may learn to know whether we are fighting the good fight of faith, and whether, when we have finished our course, we shall appear as successful candidates for that crown of righteousness, which no man can deserve, but which all may obtain who seek it in the way of God's appointment,—through faith in Him who died for our sins, who rose for our justification, who ascended up on high to plead our cause, and who ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God through him.

SERMON XXXIII.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

EPHES iv. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

AS under the Old-Testament dispensation the great promise to which the faithful Israelite was taught to look, was the coming of the Messiah; so, under the New, the coming of the Holy Spirit was predicted, for the teaching, and comforting, and sanctifying of the Christian. Our Lord expressly consoled his disciples with the argument that it was expedient he should go away; for that if he went not away the Holy Spirit would not come; but that, if he went away, he would send him to them. So effectually did he fulfil this promise, that we find on the day of Pentecost this blessed Spirit descending in his powerful influences upon the assembly of the faithful, teaching them not only to speak with new tongues but greatly animating and comforting their hearts; so that

many who had hitherto been the most fearful and unbelieving, became from that moment resolute and courageous in the cause of their Redeemer, and even submitted to martyrdom rather than forsake their Lord.

The Holy Spirit, though less openly and miraculously, yet not less really, still descends upon the Christian in the present day, instructing him when he is ignorant, guiding him when he is ready to wander, supporting him when weak, sanctifying him when encompassed by the sinful infirmities of his fallen nature, and consoling him amidst the troubles and perturbations of the world. He does not, however, find the heart naturally prepared for the reception of so exalted a guest. Sin separates between God and the human soul. His Divine influences are coldly received or deliberately counteracted; and in consequence, he is said to become grieved at the hardness of our hearts. Surely we should not so often suffer this unhappy effect to take place, if we duly consider the infinite importance of the influences of this Divine Agent; "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;" without whom we cannot be delivered from error, or guided into truth; and who alone can sanctify us, or make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Humbly looking, then, to Him for his gracious influences and assistance

rightly to consider and duly to practise a duty so immediately relating to our conduct towards himself, let us view,

First, The exhortation in the text;

Secondly, The motives on which it is grounded.

First. We are to view the exhortation itself: *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.* By "the Holy Spirit of God" we are to understand the Third Person in the sacred and undivided Trinity; equal with the Father and the Son, and sustaining towards mankind the offices of a Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter.

To speak of *grieving* this Divine Person may seem an expression of some difficulty, and requiring consideration. To suppose God capable of grief, or any other human passion, would be inconsistent with his nature. The expression, therefore, is one of accommodation to our weakness and ignorance. The Holy Spirit is said to be grieved when we act towards him in such a manner as, comparing earthly things with heavenly, would be likely to grieve an endeared and exalted friend; or when he exhibits towards us, in return, such symptoms of displeasure as would, in the case of a fellow-creature, be considered as evidence of his being grieved at our conduct. The Scriptures, being accustomed to represent God

as the Father and the Friend of his people, frequently employ such expressions to point out his feelings towards them, whether of anger or of complacency, as would be most correspondent to the idea of such a heavenly relationship. To *grieve* the Divine Spirit evidently intimates more than the mere counteraction of his influences on the part of an unconverted and wicked man. *This* is to rebel against him, to resist him, and to do despite to him. But to *grieve* him seems to intimate, that the sin was against light and knowledge; a sin of ingratitude as well as of folly; a sin against grace received and mercy proffered, as well as against the dignity and holiness of the supreme Lawgiver. We resist and provoke an enemy; but we can grieve none but a friend, or one who wishes well to us; one who pities our misconduct while he feels displeasure at our offence.

How, then, it may be asked, may the Christian be said to violate the exhortation in the text? In what way does he grieve the Spirit of God? To this it may be replied, that *every* sin, *every* act, or thought, or word inconsistent with his holy profession, has this effect. He is "called to be a saint:" his duty and his privilege, therefore, is the cultivation of every thing that is pure and heavenly. He is utterly to forsake and abhor every evil

way, and to aspire after whatsoever is lovely and of good report. He is to grow in humility and penitence, in faith and love, in spiritual-mindedness and meetness for heaven; and in proportion as he fails in any of these respects, he grieves the Spirit of God.

But it is not necessary, or possible, to specify minutely and individually every act by which the Holy Spirit may be grieved. St. Paul, in the passage from which the text is taken, was enumerating various sins, which he exhorted the Ephesians to shun; and in the midst of the catalogue, as if to furnish one general rule and argument applicable to every occasion, he interposes the injunction before us. The sins which he pointedly mentions, and which, therefore, may be considered as particularly offensive to the Holy Spirit, especially when indulged in by a professor of religion, are uncleanness, falsehood, theft, evil conversation, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-speaking. Now every religious person must have often felt in his own case how greatly these sins grieve the Holy Spirit. For what are the deadness of soul, the want of satisfaction in religion, the conscious guilt and remorse that arise in the heart of the Christian upon the commission of sin, but marks of the displeasure of the Holy Spirit, who employs

these means among others to punish our wanderings, and to bring us back to the right path? He shews his displeasure against sin by withdrawing the light of his countenance, and leaving the sinner, at least for a time, to the effects of his own waywardness and folly. Guilt takes possession of the mind; prayer is no longer a willing and hopeful expression of the wants and wishes of the heart to a reconciled as well as Almighty Friend; and what was once a way of pleasantness and path of peace is now beset with thorns and briars, which the hand of the transgressor himself has planted. The hope and joy which he once possessed have vanished; the promises of God appear no longer on his side; while his threatenings are impending over him, and destruction seems to be his portion. He is bowed down and dismayed, while He whose love and mercy can alone deliver him, is grieved, and withdraws the light of his countenance. By deep penitence, with earnest prayer, and vigilance, and a humble trust in the death and merits of the Redeemer, mercy may again shine upon his path; but a deliberate and wilful continuance in those sins which grieved the Holy Spirit will at length quench his influences altogether, and consign the sinner to the punishment due to his transgressions. "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his

neck, shall suddenly perish, and that without a remedy."

Without, however, adverting to the numerous ways in which we may grieve the Holy Spirit, we may remark, that he is grieved when we counteract his influences under any of the characters which he is pleased to bear towards mankind. Is he a Teacher and Enlightener? We grieve him when we resist the truth of God's word; when we willingly submit to ignorance or error in religion; or when we fail duly to examine into the great topics which constitute the subjects of his instruction. What numerous benefits has he afforded us; what opportunities of religious information! We have received line upon line, and precept upon precept: we have had, perhaps, the advantages of a religious education, the reading of the Scriptures, with all the other public and private means of grace. Must not, then, the Divine Dispenser of these blessings be greatly grieved, if we still continue ignorant, thoughtless, or inattentive respecting our eternal welfare? Is there not abundant cause for his displeasure, if, after having done so much for us, we neglect so great salvation? Again; is he a Comforter? We grieve him, when, instead of cheerfully submitting to the Divine appointments, we reject his consolations, and evidence a rebellious or discontented spirit.

If those consolations be wanting to us which it is his office to bestow, the unhappy effect must be traced to our own unholiness or inconsistency of conduct; and this must grieve Him, whose office as a Comforter is thus rendered unavailing for the repose of our souls. Thus also he is grieved through the injuries that fall upon the Gospel by means of the unamiable character of some of its professed adherents. But chiefly is he grieved by the resistance made to him in his highly important office of a Sanctifier. It is here that he is most opposed and thwarted in his gracious influences for the benefit of our souls. Our inherent, our abiding corruptions, and too often our wilful and cherished sins, check his benign and salutary operations. Not a day or hour passes by, in which some unhallowed thought, or word, or action, does not occur, to evince our proneness to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Secondly. Having thus considered the exhortation in the text, we come next to touch upon the motives on which it is grounded.

The passage itself furnishes us with one or two considerations which may justly be viewed as very powerful dissuasives from the sin of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. The very appellation itself, is a forcible argument. The character given to this Divine Person, as a

"Spirit," and as "Holy," might well deter us from those things which we know to be offensive in his sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: how then shall the transgressor escape unpunished? But the Divinity of his nature, implied in the phrase "the Spirit of God," is a still more powerful dissuasive; for he whom we offend and grieve is not a created being, like ourselves; one whom we can deceive or intimidate or overcome: He is the High and Holy God; he has infinite power to punish, as well as infinite mercy to save; and in proportion to the exaltation of the person, is the magnitude of the crime. To oppose him deliberately and systematically is the greatest of all offences: for our Lord himself said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."

But the motive more directly urged is an appeal to our gratitude and personal interest; "By him ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Such is our obligation to him; He is not an unconcerned or inactive spectator of our spiritual condition; but, on the contrary, effectually operates in our hearts by his sacred influences, sealing us for his own, and qualifying us for the heavenly possession.

The expression "to seal" is capable of dif-

ferent significations; but it would seem chiefly to imply, that by means of the Holy Spirit diffusing his graces in our hearts, converting us from our sins, leading us by faith to a Redeemer for salvation, and working in us the fruits of holy obedience, we are marked out, or set apart, and stamped as it were with a seal, to specify our character. Sanctification of heart and life is the best and strongest test of our state before God. Where it exists, it is the pledge of future glory: for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God." Thus, by the sanctifying operation of the Spirit in the heart, we become marked out as the flock of the Great Shepherd: we are no longer our own, but, being bought with the price of the blood of Christ, we are bound in duty, and invited as our privilege, to devote ourselves as the willing servants of Him who loved us and gave himself for us. Thus living and dying, our salvation is secure; we are sealed for it; and at length, when the body is at the last day redeemed from the grave, both body and soul shall be re-united in heaven. That will indeed be in a conspicuous manner the day of redemption; and to that are we sealed by the sacred stamp of character given us by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost.

Such appears to be the Apostle's argument. Our sins committed under such circumstances

partake of the character of the blackest ingratitude: they grieve our best and most exalted Benefactor, against whom they are most immediately directed. Let us, then, by every tie of love and gratitude, by every motive of hope and fear, by every merciful promise and every warning and threatening of the Divine word, be urged to labour after such a holy and consistent frame of soul, and such a heavenly line of conduct, as may not repel or grieve or quench the Spirit, but, on the contrary, invite as it were his blessed influences, and bring down upon us all the gracious effects of instruction, consolation, and sanctification, which it is his office to impart.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE SIN, AFFLICTION, AND RESTORATION OF MANASSEH.

2 CHRON. xxiii. 12, 13.

And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.

THE narratives of the Old Testament are not to be read as mere matters of history, but as records of the providential dispensations of God in the concerns of mankind, and as fraught with lessons of the most valuable moral and religious instruction. In this light we are to consider the account handed down to us of Manasseh king of Judah. An uninspired historian could only have informed us of his evil life, his affliction, his repentance, his restoration to prosperity, and his subsequent good conduct; but the sacred writer exhibits to us the manner in which the hand of God was visible

throughout these events. It was not a matter of chance that Manasseh fell into adversity; for it was a scourge expressly sent upon him for his transgressions: nor was it by chance that he was restored to his kingdom, but by the unseen interposition of the all-wise Disposer of events, and in consequence of his deep humiliation and humble prayer. It is thus that the Scriptures teach us maxims of heavenly wisdom, not only in their direct exhortations and promises, but in the narratives which they record, all being written so as to display the conduct of God towards his creatures; his wisdom and righteousness, his justice and his mercy, his anger against the transgressor, his favour to the humble penitent, his infinite patience and forbearance towards all. We see embodied in actual facts our own circumstances; our sins and our mercies; what we have to hope or to fear; what our Creator requires of us; how he will act towards us. He is represented as ever present with us, about "our path and our bed;" that is, by day and by night, "searching out all our ways," recording all our actions, comforting his servants in their afflictions, making a way for their escape, and proving himself "a very present help in time of trouble."

The chief particulars which the narrative under our consideration suggests, are the aggravated transgressions of Manasseh; the con-

sequent affliction which befel him; his repentance in his affliction; his deliverance from it; and his future obedience to God. And may we, while we reflect upon this short but affecting history apply to our own hearts, and may the Holy Spirit apply to us, the instruction which it affords, that we may learn the awful guilt of forsaking God; the punishment which, sooner or later, and if not in this world certainly in another, it must bring upon us; the necessity of repentance and turning to our offended Creator, who is willing notwithstanding our offences to become to us a reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, not imputing to us our offences, but pardoning us by his free mercy, through the obedience unto death of his blessed Son, our only Mediator and Advocate, and renewing our hearts by his Holy Spirit, that we may henceforth obey his commands and live to his glory.

First, then, the chapter before us details the transgressions of Manasseh. His sins were of a very heinous character, and were committed under circumstances which greatly aggravated their enormity. The narrative mentions several particulars, which shew the fearful extent of his offences.

1. He sinned immediately against God. Every sin is indeed a transgression of the commands

of our Creator; but some sins seem as it were to shew a more than ordinary contempt for his Infinite Majesty: they imply a direct denial of his presence; they urge him to vindicate the honour of his name; they practically speak the language of the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God." Of this kind was the sin of idolatry which Manasseh so flagrantly committed; for he reared up altars for an idol or false god, called Baalim; and made groves for the cruel and licentious rites of heathen superstition: he worshipped the host of heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and served them; instead of serving Him who made them, and rules them in their courses. He even carried his profaneness and provocation against God to so great an extent, that he built altars for these pagan idols in the courts of the house of the Lord, and set up for worship a carved image in the temple itself, of "which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house will I put my name for ever."

2. But not only did Manasseh "work much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger," but his sins against God were followed by sins against his neighbour. Having cast off the fear of his Creator, he became dangerous to all around him. His heart was so greatly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that it is said, "he shed innocent blood very much, till he

had filled Jerusalem from one end to another;" and he even caused his own children to pass through the fire, in the valley of the son of Hinnom.

3. To aggravate still more his offences, he not only sinned himself, but he delighted in causing others to sin also; for it is said that "he made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen." The ungodly add fearfully to their own offences, by seducing others to offend. "If a ruler hearken to lies," says Solomon, "all his servants are wicked;" and even in the most humble sphere of life "evil communications" in like manner "corrupt good manners;" and this not only by the natural effect of bad example, but by the positive efforts which sinners employ to lead others into temptation. This was the case in regard to the first transgression which was committed in the Garden of Eden; for satan, having himself sinned against God, tempted Eve to sin also; and Eve, having sinned, drew Adam with her into the transgression: and it has continued to be the case ever since; for which reason the Scriptures frequently warn us, as we value our immortal souls, against the society of the wicked. "Their word will eat as doth a canker:" "The companion of fools shall be destroyed."

4. Another aggravation of the sinful conduct

of Manasseh was, his ingratitude for the benefits which he had received from that all-merciful Being whom he so daringly offended. This is particularly mentioned in the chapter before us; where, in the account given of his sinfulness in introducing idolatry into the city and temple of Jerusalem, mention is made of the special favours which Jehovah had bestowed upon the people of Israel, and his promise not to remove them out of the land which he had appointed for their fathers, provided they would take heed to do all that he had commanded them. The ingratitude therefore of rebelling against so gracious a Being, was equalled only by the folly of making him an enemy and losing the promised rewards of his favour.

5. To mention but one aggravation more of the sins of Manasseh, and that which greatly added to their enormity, they were committed deliberately against knowledge and warning, against the secret checks of conscience, and against the early instructions of a pious education. For Manasseh was the son of king Hezekiah, of whom it is recorded that "throughout all Judah," and more especially doubtless in his own family, "he wrought that which was good, and right, and truth, before the Lord his God: and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he

did it with all his heart." And though, unhappily for Manasseh, he died when that prince was but twelve years old, he doubtless both instructed him himself in the ways of God, as long as he lived, and appointed others to perpetuate his endeavours after his decease. Manasseh therefore could not but know what the Lord his God required of him: and it could not be without many severe remonstrances of conscience, that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen." He had also the Scriptures of truth, so far as then revealed, to direct him; he had besides, as is expressly mentioned in the second verse of the chapter, the fearful example of the nations whom the Lord had cast out for those abominations to warn him; and, to add to the whole, an especial revelation had been vouchsafed to prevent his pursuing his evil courses: "for the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken."

Under all these circumstances, highly aggravated was his guilt; and equally aggravated and eternal would have been his punishment, had not the subsequent part of his history presented a very different aspect to that which we have been contemplating. The succeeding stages of his life remain to be briefly noticed. We have seen his guilt; let us proceed,

Secondly, to consider the affliction which in consequence befel him. Happy was it for him that he was not suffered to proceed in his iniquities unchecked. Sorrow, we are told, "springs not out of the ground:" it does not occur by chance, or without meaning. All affliction is the consequence of sin; and it is well when our troubles in this life are made the instruments of leading us to God, that we may not suffer that eternal punishment which our iniquities merit in the world to come. In the case of Manasseh, the hand of God was clearly visible in his punishment. It is said, that the Lord brought upon him and his people—for both he and his people had sinned — the host of the king of Assyria, and they took Manasseh, among the thorns; that is, in some thicket to which he had retreated for safety; and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. A greater temporal calamity than this could scarcely befal a man like Manasseh, revelling in ease and luxury, a despotic sovereign, accustomed from his childhood to receive the most servile homage, and to give law to his people by the slighest intimation of his will. Yet, what was this punishment compared with what his sins against God deserved? What was it to lose an earthly crown compared to the loss which he had voluntarily incurred of a crown eternal in the heavens? or to be bound with

fetters in a foreign land, exposed for a few short months or years to scorn and insult, compared with being bound with chains of darkness in that awful world where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth to all eternity?

Thirdly. Our text notices his repentance in his affliction. His captivity gave him leisure for serious reflection; and by the blessing of God he was led to avail himself of it. Multitudes of persons never begin to think of their sins, or their need of salvation, till the hour of pain or sickness, of bereavement or death. Thus Manasseh in his prosperity had forgotten his Creator; but in his adversity he could find no other refuge. His false gods could not assist him; and therefore, like the prodigal son, his only refuge was to turn to the merciful Father whom he had forsaken. Our text particularly mentions, that "he besought the Lord," and that "he humbled himself before him." Prayer and repentance thus went together; he was deeply abased in his own estimation, and he entreated pardon for his offences. He had found, according to the language of Scripture, that "the way of transgressors is hard:" his iniquities had separated him from the favour of that gracious Being who is the only fountain of true happiness; and the gratification which he had hoped for from indulging in them, proved to be

as short-lived as it was base and sinful. Thus forsaken and dejected, his affliction was overruled for his spiritual benefit. Though his offences had been numerous and aggravated, and his remorse was correspondently deep, he did not plunge, like the apostate Judas, into utter despair of pardon: he had learned enough of the attributes of God, to know that he was gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; he therefore, in a distant land, and in the extremity of distress, looks, like Jonah, once more towards God's holy temple. If that refuge fail him he is lost, and lost for ever; but fail him it did not: for,

Fourthly, we are told in our text of his deliverance from his affliction. The Lord, it is said, heard his supplication, and brought him back again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. The following verses allude to his future prosperity; for, by the dispensation under which Manasseh lived, it pleased the Almighty often to bestow temporal blessings as a mark of his special mercy; and as the afflictions which first led Manasseh to repentance and prayer, had been of a worldly kind, so when it pleased God to restore him to his favour, he gave him also worldly blessings, life and liberty, and a successful issue in the affairs of his kingdom. But far above all these outward blessings was the

forgiveness of his sins. Worldly prosperity may be either a benefit or a curse to its possessor: but to be pardoned and justified: to have our prayer for mercy answered, and the love of God, notwithstanding our deepest feelings of humility and contrition, shed abroad in our hearts through faith in Christ Jesus; to enjoy a humble hope, that among the mansions of blessedness which the Saviour has prepared for his true followers, one will be found into which we shall at the last day be admitted beyond the reach either of sin or sorrow,—this is indeed a blessing of unspeakable value, and should constrain us with earnest gratitude to devote ourselves to the service of our God and Saviour. This leads us to remark,

Fifthly, the subsequent obedience of Manasseh. The narrative is brief; but it particularly mentions his future obedience to God, and his zeal for his glory. His heart being renewed, his course of life changed with it. It is said, that he now "knew that the Lord he was God." He had discovered this both in his power to afflict him and in his power to restore him; and now knowing him to be the only true God he resolved to worship him as such. He had repented, and he brought forth fruits meet for repentance. Much was forgiven him, and he loved much. First, he turned

from his former sins; for "he took away the strange gods and the idols out of the house of the Lord;" not only this, but he began to practise his long-neglected duties; "he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded his people to serve the Lord God of Israel." As his transgressions had been public, he wished his contrition for them to be public also; and as he had led others astray by his authority and example, he was now urgent to bring them back to the right path. But, unhappily, not with equal success; for, though the people sacrificed only to the Lord their God, they continued to disobey him in sacrificing in the high places. It is easy to draw others into sin; but God only can restore them to newness of life. Manasseh found that the evil effects of the idolatrous customs which he had favoured still remained: but he used his best efforts to prevent them; and thus he proved the sincerity of his repentance, and that his turning to God was not merely the transient effect of affliction, to be forgotten as soon as the affliction was over; but that it was the settled purpose of his soul, the effect of true conversion, "he took the testimonies of God as his heritage for ever," and without doubt found them "the rejoicing of his heart." God had been "his hiding-place and his shield" in his

adversity: and he could therefore say with David, "I hope in thy word: depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

To follow his example in this respect, is the most important application which we can make of the above narrative. We have not indeed shed blood, or literally sacrificed to idols, as he did; neither have we had any inducement to do so, or occasion of doing so. But, on the other hand, we have not been exposed to the temptations which he must have met with, left defenceless at the early age of twelve years, amidst the seductions of the world, as a sovereign prince, with every facility for the indulgence of his will and his passions, and meeting perhaps with few to controul, and many to foster his evil propensities. But shall we therefore say, that, according to our circumstances and temptations, we have not also grievously offended God? Is there one of his commands which, in heart or in deed, according to our Lord's spiritual application of them, we have not violated? We need then, like Manasseh, to humble ourselves before him; and we have his example left upon record to encourage us to do so, assured that, if we turn to God, he will turn to us, and, for the sake of his blessed Son, will pardon our sins, and renew us

by his Holy Spirit, after his own Divine image. Let us then earnestly seek this inestimable blessing; let us neither slight it on the one hand, nor despair of obtaining it on the other. It is to be obtained, if only we seek it, and seek it aright, and seek it before the opportunity for procuring it is for ever lost. Who knows how few days or months more may seal up the measure of our iniquities, and shut out repentance and pardon? Among the multitudes who sin like Manasseh, how few repent like him, and turn to their offended God, before the door of mercy is closed! Let us then seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; let us forsake the vain idols of this world's estimation, and worship the true God, in the Gospel of his Son; let us study to obey his laws; let us devote our future lives to his glory; and then, when this short existence has for ever passed away, we shall be admitted to his eternal kingdom, to wear a crown of glory which shall never fade.

SERMON XXXV.

THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

HEB. xi. 24—26.

By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect to the recompence of the reward.

ST. PAUL is shewing in this chapter the nature of faith; and he does it by setting before us the examples of various individuals, who exhibited in their conduct the operation of that heavenly principle. Among these, the instance of Moses is very memorable. He had been educated in the court of Egypt, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; and might probably have good reason to expect, that, after the death of the king, he should succeed to the throne. He was now arrived at a time of life when the splendours of a court, and the oppor-

tunities which it afforded for the indulgence of pride, ambition, and those various passions which war against the soul, could not but present to his mind very powerful worldly attractions. Yet he was enabled to triumph over all these temptations, and to prefer taking up his lot with a despised and afflicted people—a people reduced to the bitter bondage of slavery—because, oppressed and humbled as they were, they were still "the people of God;" they were that peculiar nation to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever." Now the principle which caused him to make this unlikely but truly wise choice, the Apostle says, was faith: he believed what God had spoken, and he acted accordingly. Had he consulted the corrupt inclinations of our fallen nature; had he looked only to the wealth or honours, the ease or enjoyments of the present world; his conduct would have been very different. He might, indeed, have enjoyed "the pleasures of sin for a season;" he might have revelled in pomp and luxury; he might have been, perhaps, a victorious general, or powerful sovereign; he might have built splendid cities, or have bequeathed his

mouldering dust to repose under a costly pyramid: but he had never had his name enrolled in the glorious catalogue of those who "died in faith;" and he had never joined the illustrious company of heaven, among whom his believing forefathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, had been received, to wear the crown of everlasting life, and with whom he himself now beholds and rejoices in the presence of that Saviour for whose cause he was content to suffer reproach and persecution, and the loss of all that was accounted valuable and splendid by an ungodly world.

This interesting narrative presents three distinct subjects for our consideration: First, the remarkable choice which Moses made; Secondly, his reasons for making that choice; and, Thirdly, the principle which gave to those reasons so powerful an influence over his conduct. His choice was, "not to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," but "to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." His reasons for making that choice were, that "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," and that "he had respect to the recompence of the reward." And the principle which gave such powerful influence to those reasons was "faith;" that firm, practical conviction which is "the substance

of things hoped for, the evidence of thing not seen."

First, then, we are informed of the remarkable choice which Moses made. For remarkable it truly was, being utterly opposed to all that we might naturally have expected; utterly opposed to the usual practices of mankind; utterly opposed to the gratification of pride and ambition; utterly opposed to a life of ease or pleasure; utterly opposed to the acquirement of wealth; utterly opposed, in short, to an indulgence in any of those habits which are most congenial to the unrenewed heart. It may often happen that one sin restrains the practical dominion of another—that one man will sacrifice his covetousness to his ambition; another, his love of pleasure to his love of money; another, his propensity to revel in profligacy of life to his desire to obtain worldly influence and estimation;—but in such cases there is a compromise made, as it were, between two classes of sinful practices: nothing is sacrificed to conscience; nothing is done from love to God and a desire to obey his will: so much only of one particular evil habit is avoided as would be inconsistent with a full indulgence in another. But it was not thus in the case of Moses. As it respects the present life, he had all to lose, and nothing to gain. He gave up

affluence, and power, and worldly honour; he refused to be called the son of a king's daughter, and renounced the splendours and dignities attached to that exalted station: and this without any earthly equivalent; nay, with the certain prospect of suffering affliction with a despised and outcast people; of becoming a captive among captives, a slave among slaves.

Now, had this been forced upon him by violence, we might not so much have wondered at his endeavouring to reconcile his mind to his lot, and for his own sake bearing with patience a burden which he found he could not throw off. But what is truly remarkable in his history is, that this exchange was a matter of deliberate choice; it was made when he came to years of mature understanding; it was made also with a full knowledge both of the sacrifices he must undergo and the evils he must incur by making it. During his childhood and youth, every effort had probably been used to alienate him from the faith of his fathers, and to teach him the superstitions of Egypt; in all the wisdom of which, including, without doubt, the boasted learning of its idolatrous religion, he was carefully educated. But now he had arrived at an age when he must choose between true and false religion; between the service of God and the service of the world; between the reproach of Christ and the pleasures of Egypt: and this

choice was to be made under circumstances remarkably calculated to lead him astray from the only right path. It was perhaps expected of him, as a necessary condition to his full adoption into Pharaoh's family and succeeding to his crown, that he should now explicitly declare, both before the Egyptians and the Israelites, whether he would worship the God of his fathers or the idols of the land in which he dwelt. No compromise could be allowed: he must choose whom he would serve; and, having made his choice, must prepare for all the good or evil which might accompany it.

Thus circumstanced, he came boldly forward, and selected a lot in which he knew affliction and reproach awaited him, in preference to all the worldly pleasures which might have been his portion. In the language of our Christian vows, he "renounced the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh;" he "believed all the articles of the faith," so far as then clearly revealed, and, as the Apostle informs us in the text, with an especial reference to Christ, the promised Messiah; and he made it his studious desire "to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of his life."

But we are to inquire,

Secondly, what were the reasons which influenced his choice. It was not that he was indifferent to pain or pleasure; that he was not open to the natural temptations arising from worldly advantages; or that he courted affliction and reproach for their own sake. If what he gave up had been really good, and what he received in exchange only evil, his conduct would have been absurd and irrational. But in forming a due estimate of both, he found that the opposite was the fact; that the exchange, ill advised as it might appear to a careless and ungodly world, was in truth infinitely to his advantage. And why so? Because "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;" he considered it a better portion "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" and this, because "he had respect to the recompence of the reward." Contrasting, like the Apostle Paul, the things which are seen with the things which are not seen, he inferred the infinite superiority of the latter over the former, from the consideration that these are temporal, but those eternal. Knowing that the time of our sojourning upon earth is short, he arrived practically at the conclusion of the same Apostle; "It remaineth, that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they

wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Did he make sacrifices? These very sacrifices were eventually gain; for he sacrificed those snares and temptations and corrupt desires which might have proved the ruin of his soul. Did he incur affliction and reproach for the cause of Christ? This was gain also: for, in the first place, the burden which he bore was truly honourable; he suffered not as an evil-doer, but in the best of causes—he was persecuted for righteousness sake; and of such our Lord has said, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake." Like the Apostles, therefore, he might well "rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ." "If ye be reproached," says St. Peter, "for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And, again, as the afflictions which he incurred for his piety were truly honourable, so also were they conducive to his spiritual benefit; for "we glory in tribulations," says St. Paul, because "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience

hope." Though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby." Again, he might the more willingly welcome the afflictions which should befal him, considering how greatly they would be lightened by the testimony of a good conscience, the approbation of God, and the supporting influences of the Holy Spirit. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us," says the Apostle, "so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Another reason for his preference was, as already intimated, the short-lived nature of worldly troubles and worldly joys. The pleasures of sin, he knew were but "for a season;" they would soon be over, and leave behind them for ever a sting that cannot be extracted, a worm that never dies. He knew, also, that the reproach and afflictions which he should suffer were equally transient; but not so "the recompence of the reward;" that was not only unspeakably great in value, but eternal in duration. Like the Apostle, he had learned that the afflictions which "the people of God" may be called upon to endure for the cause of their Saviour are but light and momentary, while they work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He knew that, even should he fall a martyr in the cause of truth;

and for the testimony of his conscience, he would have no reason in the end to regret his choice; for the recompence of the reward, a crown eternal of glory in the heavens, would far overbalance every earthly loss or suffering. "Whosoever," said our Saviour, "shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, shall save it;" for "there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come life eternal." If we suffer with Christ—that is, for Christ and like Christ; in his cause and with his spirit—we shall reign with him; if we are truly united by faith in Christ to "the people of God" in the season of their earthly affliction, we shall partake for ever of their reward in that blessed world "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

These powerful reasons, if seriously reflected upon, will shew that there was ample cause for the choice which Moses made. But still it may be asked, Why is it, if these things be so, that the great majority of mankind do not follow his example? Why do not all to whom the record of the will of God is sent, make it

the constant rule of their life? Why do they not prefer light to darkness, eternity to time, and heaven to hell? Why, when they know that the end of their present pursuits is death, but that the gift of God is everlasting life, do they not make a right choice between the service of the world and the service of their Creator? Why, when they cannot deny that the time of their probation upon earth is short and uncertain, are they content to build all their hopes upon a sandy foundation, instead of choosing that better portion which can never be taken from them? Why do they not gladly lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel? Why do they not repair to a crucified Saviour for the pardon of their sins, and devote themselves to his blessed service? Have they more to give up, or more to endure, than had Moses? or do they seriously think that the glories of heaven are of little value; and that the passing events of the present scene are all that deserve their consideration as rational, accountable, and immortal beings?

Thirdly. In replying to these questions we arrive at our third point of inquiry—namely, the principle which influenced Moses in coming to this decision and adhering to it. The Apostle informs us that this principle was "faith." He believed what he professed, and his

belief shewed itself practically in his conduct. Thousands will admit, in words, all that has been stated respecting the value and necessity of religion, who do not thus "believe with the heart unto righteousness." They have not brought home to their minds, by serious reflection, the importance of the stake at issue. The blindness of their understandings, and their love of the present evil world, prevent their truly estimating the value of that recompence of reward which God has promised to all who love and obey him. They do not practically believe that reward to be so valuable or desirable as the Bible describes it to be; or, at least, there are other things which in their heart they love better. Their affections are so widely alienated from God, that they do not really esteem the service of God, or the reproach of Christ, to be greater riches than any earthly acquisition. In a word, they have not that firm and abiding persuasion, respecting those things which God has declared in his word, which the Apostle is describing in the chapter from which our text is taken. Their professed faith has never become to them, according to the definition already cited, "the substance of things hoped for, or the evidence of things not seen;" it has never brought the value of the soul, or the rewards of eternity, so powerfully before them, as to eclipse for

ever the vanities and pursuits of a sinful and unsatisfying world. They have not the principle which caused Enoch to "walk with God," and "to please him;" which led Noah, believing the certainty of the threatened judgment, to take shelter in the appointed ark; which made Abraham, in obedience to the Divine command, come out from a sinful land, and, in dependence upon the promise of God, seek a better country, even a heavenly; which induced him to perform the command of God even under the most painful circumstances, knowing that, sooner than the Divine promise should be broken, his son Isaac should be miraculously raised from the dead; which caused Moses to make the choice in our text; and which actuated all the other "cloud of witnesses," the triumphs of whose faith are recorded in the chapter before us.

Let, then, our earnest prayer be, that God would strengthen our faith; that, truly believing what he has revealed—feeling our sinfulness, our need of salvation, the infinite mercy of God in Christ, the necessity of true conversion to Him through the influences of the Holy Spirit, the shortness of time, the vanity of the world, the unspeakable importance of eternity, the joys of heaven, and the terrors of hell—we may lay these things to heart, and be influenced by them to "give diligence

to make our calling and election sure." Animated by this holy principle, let us "lay aside every weight" and "the sin which doth so easily beset us;" and "let us run with patience the race that is set before us," incited, not only by mortal examples, but "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured (for us) the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," where "he ever liveth to make intercession for us;" pitying our infirmities, supporting us under our afflictions, pardoning our offences, justifying us by his merits, and cleansing us by his blood.

SERMON XXXVI.

ACQUAINTING OURSELVES WITH GOD.

JOB xxii. 21—23.

Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up. Thou shalt put iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

IN meditating upon this interesting passage of Scripture, we shall, First, consider the nature of the counsel here given; and, Secondly, the benefits which will result to us from following it; and, in so doing, may our hearts be directed to God in secret prayer, that, while listening to the injunction in the text, we may be inclined to obey it, and thus obtain the inestimable blessings which he has graciously connected with a compliance with this command.

First, then, we are to consider the counsel here given, which consists of three parts;

namely, to acquaint ourselves with God,—to be at peace with him, — and to receive the law from his mouth.

1. "*Acquaint thyself with God.*" The knowledge of our Creator lies at the foundation of all religion; for, "he that cometh to God must know that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." By nature we are ignorant of him. Something might indeed be learned respecting him from his works; for "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead;" so that, adds the Apostle, men are "without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." But this knowledge is but partial: and, partial as it is, it is not generally sought by mankind. Too many never reflect upon God as the Creator of all things; their supporter and governor; and the author of all their mercies. If a slight thought of his being or attributes pass through their minds, it is soon forgotten, and leaves behind it no traces of devout love or veneration. Though they believe in his existence, they cannot be said to be acquainted with him: and the little they know, instead of being

followed up by a desire after further information, is lost to all practical purposes. They pass through life almost as though there were no God; they habitually forget him "in whom they live, and move, and have their being." Such is the wilful ignorance of the large majority of mankind, even of what they might know by the mere light of reason, reflecting upon the works of God, and assisted by the obscure remains of early revelations handed down from age to age.

But still this light is very imperfect; and it is only in the Gospel of his Son that we can become fully acquainted with him. We are naturally ignorant of many of his attributes; but in that Divine record they are clearly revealed, and their important relation to ourselves is also pointed out. We read of him as "a great God, mighty and terrible," "holy and reverend," "glorious and fearful," yet "merciful and gracious, and full of compassion;" a God too pure to behold iniquity, who has given us a perfect law to walk by, who weighs all our actions, and who will judge us according to our works. We learn not only his power, wisdom, and eternal existence, but also his mysterious nature as three persons in one God; each of the three Divine Persons bearing an infinitely gracious office

towards us miserable sinners;—the Father so loving us as to give his Son to die for our transgressions; the Son undertaking and fulfilling the engagement; and the Holy Spirit renewing our hearts, disposing us to lay hold of the hope of mercy thus set before us through the blood of a crucified Saviour, and to live to his glory in a cheerful obedience to his commands.

Now, in all these ways we are invited to acquaint ourselves with God; to arouse ourselves from our natural indifference or dislike to sacred contemplation, in order to obtain a true and saving knowledge of our Creator. Too long have we been ignorant of him—too long have we neglected to study his character; to reflect seriouslyupon his justice, his holiness, his purity; his demands upon us; his judgments against us as transgressors of his law; his promises to receive us when we truly turn to him; his power and willingness to pardon and sanctify us; and his pledge to make us his children, and to receive us to everlasting glory in heaven. Let us begin at length to acquaint ourselves with him; no longer to be strangers to him who has shewn himself our best friend, and whom to have for our enemy must prove our eternal ruin. He invites us to communion with him: let us not reject his

offer, let us not do despite to his Spirit, let us not plunge our own souls into eternal misery.

2. But, in order to obtain this sacred communion with God, it is necessary that we should be at peace with him: "*Acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace.*" Ignorance is not the only bar to a saving acquaintance with the great Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge of the world; for, added to this, there is in our fallen nature, a principle of hostility to him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." We shrink from his requirements; we dread his all-seeing eye; we are unwilling to submit to his dominion. We think him our enemy; and why? Because our conscience tells us that we have not sought for him to become our friend. We are well aware that we have offended him by our sins, and that we have not applied to him for pardon and reconciliation. We too well know that we are ready to seek our happiness in any thing rather than in his favour; that we have no desire for communion with him; that we side with his enemies, and do the things that he disapproves. Such is our state by nature; and deeply does it concern us to lay it to heart, and to turn to our justly offended Creator. He himself has mercifully provided the

means of peace; for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." Nothing therefore remains but that we on our part should avail ourselves of his offers of reconciliation. "We beseech you in Christ's stead," says an Apostle, "be ye reconciled to God." This divine peace must be founded upon an acquaintance with his character, his perfections, his commands, his plan of justifying sinners, and his various relations to us as his creatures, the subjects of his moral government, redeemed with the blood of his Son, and bound to walk in his ways, and to live to his glory. Form then this acquaintance; cultivate this peace. The Saviour has made peace by the blood of his cross; he was the Prince of Peace, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. Having thus procured peace for us, by his infinitely meritorious sacrifice, he bequeathed it to us as his dying gift: "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Shall we not then thankfully embrace this offer of pardon and reconciliation? Shall we not lay down the arms of our rebellion, and make it our chief object throughout the remainder of our lives to become loyal and obedient subjects to the Majesty of heaven? Shall we not especially seek to become endued with that saving faith in Christ Jesus, by which

only we can be justified, and obtain peace with our Creator?

3. But there is yet another article of counsel inculcated in the text: "*Receive the law from his mouth, and lay up his word in thy heart.*"—Vain would be our speculative knowledge of God, and deceitful our hopes of peace, if unaccompanied by obedience to his commands. We are exhorted therefore to learn what it is that God requires—"Receive the law from his mouth;"—and having become acquainted with his will, to cherish it in our affections, as the spring of our conduct: "Lay up his word in thy heart." For faith without works is dead: that divinely implanted grace by which we become justified and obtain peace with God, only for the merits and obedience of Jesus Christ, is also the fruitful parent of obedience to God's commands. It inclines us to receive his law in its full extent and spiritual character, as applying to the very thoughts and intentions of the heart. It renders this law, which was utterly opposed to all our tastes and wishes while in a state of sin, delightful to us, so that we are not content to admit it only into our memories and understandings, but we deposit it in our hearts as a treasure of inestimable value. "Lord, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Such was the devout exclamation of the inspired writer of the hun-

dred and nineteenth Psalm; who, in that long composition of one hundred and seventy-six verses, has scarcely omitted in any one to testify his veneration and affection for the law, the way, the testimonies, the commandments, the precepts, the word, the truth, the judgments, the righteousness, the statutes of the Supreme Lawgiver. The whole substance of this law is implied in the last verse of our text: "Return to the Almighty," and "put away iniquity from thy tabernacles." Be not content with a bare acknowledgment of sin, but wholly forsake it; and while you "abhor that which is evil," also "seek that which is good;" turn to God, imitate the example of the returning prodigal son, and adopt his language: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son." Study in future both to know and to do his will; and make him, as is said in the verses which follow our text, your "defence" and your "delight." Being acquainted with his character, as revealed in his word, being at peace with him through the blood of his Son, the only Mediator between God and man, go on to live to his glory. "Receive his laws," assured that, however strict they may at first appear, if treasured up in faith, and love, and obedience, they will become the very joy of

your heart. By walking in them, you will obtain peace of conscience, and possess a safe guide amidst all the snares of life. You will dwell under the shadow of the Almighty; you will enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding: the love of God will be shed abroad in your heart; animated by which enlivening principle, you will find his service to be perfect freedom, and will delight in it as your privilege, your solace, your unspeakable reward.

Secondly. These considerations lead us to the next point proposed for our meditation; namely, the benefits which will result from following the counsel in the text: "Thereby good shall come unto thee."

"Doth Job fear God for nought?" was the exclamation of the tempter, when informed of the eminent character of that holy man. "Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased on every side." The remark was true, though uttered with an evil design. To serve God is our bounden duty; but we do not serve him for nought: He has united our obligation with our privileges, and has attached "exceeding great and precious promises" to a compliance with his commands. He might indeed have overawed

us by his frown; he might have commanded our obedience merely on pain of his displeasure, without alluring us by any gracious pledges of his favour; but he has not acted thus: while he asserts his authority as our Creator and Governor, he also appeals to our affections, and awakens our hopes. To every command to obedience is added the promise, "Thereby good shall come unto thee." But what is the good which he offers for our acceptance? "Shall I," you may ask, "become richer or more prosperous, more respected, or more beloved in the world? Will my days be lengthened? Shall I feel less pain or sorrow? Will my earthly enjoyments be increased? What substantial visible benefit shall I ensure by an acquaintance and peace with God?" The answer to this inquiry is, that "godliness is profitable for all things; having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." So far as any temporal gift is really good for the Christian, it shall not be withheld; but his chief privilege is, that his merciful Father in heaven, who knows all his necessities, both for the body and the soul, makes the latter the especial object of his guardian care, and apportions his gifts not according to the ignorant and impatient desires of short-sighted mortals, but according to his own eternal goodness and wisdom, having respect to the highest and ever-

lasting welfare of the individual. He makes all things work together for his good. Having given his own Son for him, he will with him also freely give him whatever can conduce to his best interests. All things are his, whether "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." Even, therefore, should his lot in this world be full of pain and sorrow, he has what infinitely counterbalances it: his iniquities are pardoned, and his sins are covered; he enjoys the love and favour of God; he has tranquillity of conscience, and a hope full of immortality and glory; he has strength afforded him in weakness, guidance in perplexity, and support in trial: he has communion and fellowship with the Father of spirits, through the mediation and intercession of his Son, and the influences of the Holy Ghost. No affliction can befal him but what, could he see it in all its results, would be acknowledged to have been for his good. Even the last and saddest event which nature dreads, the temporary separation of soul and body in death, shall be to him but the entrance on a state of never-ending enjoyment, beyond the reach of change or care. Then shall he behold his glorified Redeemer, and be made like him; and "he shall inherit all things; and God will be his God, and he shall be his son." This is the great, the supreme good; for all other blessings

are nothing in comparison with the eternal presence and favour of the infinite Author and Bestower of every perfect gift; and this inestimable blessing shall be the lot of all who acquaint themselves with God, and are at peace with him, and receive the law at his mouth.

In the case of Job, who lived at a period in which God was often pleased to attach temporal rewards to spiritual obedience, the good promised was of a mixed nature, comprehending both earthly prosperity and prosperity of soul. "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brook. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways." And, in general, in every age of the world, God is pleased to accompany with a temporal blessing that moral, diligent, self-denying and upright conduct which necessarily follows upon true piety. Health, contentment, esteem, and a moderate, yet cheerful enjoyment of earthly blessings, are, in the usual

order of God's providence, attendant upon those habits which true religion fosters. But, even where, for infinitely wise and merciful reasons, the case is permitted to be otherwise; where sickness, or poverty, or reproach is the lot of the faithful and consistent follower of Christ; he has still within his breast a peace which the world cannot take away, and he looks forward with earnest expectation to those higher and never-failing blessings which shall be his lot in a future world, knowing that "these light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Have we then become acquainted with God? are we at peace with him? and do we obey his commandments? If not, how vain our hopes! how worthless our pursuits! how unsatisfactory our pleasures! how gloomy our prospects! Living and dying unacquainted with Him, we shall be banished for ever from his presence; the direst misery which can befal one of his creatures. If we reject that sacred communion with him to which he invites us upon earth, he will withdraw from us the light of his countenance in the eternal world, and consign us to the blackness of darkness for ever. And do we not tremble at the thought that such may finally be our lot? Do we not repent of our past folly and disobedience, and desire to begin a new

and spiritual life? Long enough have we lived in habits of practical disregard to him; long enough have we despised his offers of peace and reconciliation; long enough have we rejected the promised grace of his Holy Spirit to restore us, in virtue of the merits and intercession of the Saviour, to that state of fellowship with God which we had forfeited by our transgressions. Let us no longer be insensible to our duty, or blind to our best interests. Let us "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

SERMON XXXVII.

FAITH PURIFYING THE HEART.

ACTS XV. 9.

And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

THE connexion in which these words stand will best shew their meaning. A dispute had arisen in the church of Antioch, whether or not it was necessary that the Gentile Christians should submit to certain of the Jewish rites. The dissension having risen to a great height, it was determined that Paul and Barnabas, and some others, should go to Jerusalem to consult with the other apostles and elders upon the subject. St. Peter, who did not think the Jewish rites necessary for the new converts, rose, and informed the assembly of the wonderful manner in which God had converted the Gentiles by his ministry. And in order to shew that they were become true believers without the Jewish rites, he insisted strongly upon the fact that God had given to them the Holy Ghost,

and had purified their hearts by faith. As though he had said, 'It is useless for us any longer to dispute whether or not the Gentiles can become true Christians without the ceremonial rites of the Jewish law; for here is a fact which sets the matter at rest: I bring you forward the case of some who actually *have* become so; persons who, without circumcision, have been admitted into the covenant of God as much as ourselves: as a proof of which, the Holy Spirit has been given to them, and has purified their hearts by faith. There is, therefore, no longer any difference between them and us; for with God, neither "circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."'

It will afford an instructive view of the passage under consideration, to consider the two following particulars:—

First, That under the Gospel dispensation faith possesses that important property which the Jews attributed to their ceremonial observances—it *purifies the heart.*

Secondly, The means by which it effects this purification.

First, then, faith does for the Christian what the Jews attributed to the rites of the ceremonial law—it purifies the heart.—When Jehovah gave his covenant to his chosen people Israel, he

instituted a variety of ritual observances, both for their pardon and their cleansing. The rite by which they were admitted in their infancy to the privileges of their church, was intended to point out the necessity of purity of heart. Their divers washings, and their abstinence from every thing ceremonially unclean, had a similar object. In like manner, their sacrifices, offered as God had commanded, were connected with the pardon of sin. The penitent confessed his transgression, presented the customary offering, and received by faith the promised blessing.

Now the Jews readily understood these circumstances. They well knew, that, through the means of God's appointment, their sins were atoned for, and their consciences were cleansed. Not indeed, as St. Paul most convincingly shews, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that there was any virtue or merit in these outward rites; but they had reference to that Great Sacrifice which should be offered in the end of the world for the salvation of men. It was by means of the death and merits of the Redeemer, of which their sacrifices were a type, that their sins were pardoned and their consciences were purified.

The Jews, therefore, had long learned to connect the idea of purification in its twofold sense, as a deliverance both from the guilt and the defilement of sin, with the rites of the

Mosaic law. While that law remained in force their notion was perfectly correct, because God had seen fit to establish such a connexion between them. St. Peter therefore avails himself of these views, in order to shew that the Gentiles who had become Christians were not to undergo the rites of the law. He did not, in the passage before us, expressly contend that the efficacy of the ceremonial law had ceased, though that was true; but he seems to use an argument of the following nature. 'What,' as though he had said, 'is your object in wishing the Gentile converts to submit to Jewish rites? Doubtless it is their purification. But why speak of purification? for they are purified already; not, indeed, by the law of Moses, but by the faith of Christ. The former owed all its efficacy to the express appointment of God: it is now abolished, and can no longer purify. But the great end still remains the same, and that end is fully attained in the Gospel, and is remarkably exemplified in the case of these Gentile converts.'

Faith, then, we are to shew, accomplishes the two-fold purification here mentioned. By uniting us to Christ, the great Sacrifice, it conveys to us both that righteousness, or legal purification, which the Jews typically derived from their ceremonial offerings; and that actual, or imparted, purification, of which their

washings and circumcision were the outward signs. That is, by faith as an instrument, we are both justified and sanctified. A believing Jew, in offering his sacrifice, was accepted, and his sins were pardoned; a believer under the Christian dispensation enjoys similar mercies: his sins are pardoned and his person is accepted, through that great Sacrifice of which his faith lays hold. Again; a believing Jew was cleansed, at least figuratively, by the rites which he performed: a believer under the Gospel is also cleansed, by the Holy Spirit, through faith that is in Christ. Thus both the guilt and the reigning power of sin are done away. The believer stands fully acquitted of his transgressions by the death and merits of his Saviour, while his nature also is sanctified by the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost.

That such is the fact, is shewn throughout the whole of the New Testament. One or two passages only need be cited. There is a very convincing one to this effect in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Christ being come," says the Apostle, "an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the

blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Here St. Paul ascribes both our redemption and our sanctification to the blood of Christ, and that in a far higher sense than was the case with respect to the rites of the Jewish law. Our conscience is purified from the *guilt* of sin, and our heart from its *polluting* power. The application of these two blessings is through faith. We are therefore said, in the commission given to St. Paul, to be "sanctified by faith;" and we are also spoken of, in various places, as being "justified by faith." St. Peter's argument was therefore very forcible and convincing. The great Searcher of all hearts had himself borne witness to the truth and acceptableness of the faith of the Gentile converts, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, even as he had done to the believing Jews; putting no difference between them, having purified their hearts by faith.

Secondly. Such being the fact, we are to endeavour to account for it, and to shew the *means* by which faith effects this purification. It does not, perhaps, at first sight appear what

connexion faith can have with holiness. Indeed, there have been persons in every age who do not see that there is any connexion at all between them, and who even go so far as to think that they are opposed to each other. This was the case in the days of St. Paul himself; for when he taught the doctrine of justification by faith, and not by works, there were some who appeared to think that such a doctrine led to the dreadful conclusion, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Some men speak of faith and good works as if these Christian graces were enemies, instead of friends. They reason as follows: "If we are to be justified by good works, there is a powerful motive for practising them; but if faith alone is to justify us, then why need we attend to moral duties?" Thus the great doctrine of free grace is supposed by many to be contrary to the interests of practical godliness.

Now to all this it might be sufficient to reply, that a very different conclusion is maintained in Scripture. Not only in the text, but in numerous other places, holiness is spoken of as the constant fruit of faith. But in order to satisfy our minds more completely, let us consider the means as well as the effect; let us examine *how* it is that faith thus purifies the heart, and produces the blessed consequences which the Scriptures attribute to its operation.

This will appear, if we consider faith in different points of view, as *the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen—as working by love—and as the gift of God.* All these things are spoken of faith in the Scriptures, and we shall see that they fully account for its property of purifying the heart.

1. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—Thus it gives a feeling of reality to all that is written in the word of God. Under its influence, the promises, the threatenings, the entreaties, the remonstrances, contained in the Bible, assume their proper force. The man believes and feels what he reads. He finds himself a sinner; he sees the wrath of God proclaimed against sin; he trembles at the justice of the Almighty, and acknowledges that he deserves eternal condemnation. On the other hand, the voice of mercy reaches his ear: he reads, and believes while he reads it, that God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live; that Christ came from on high, assumed our nature, atoned for our transgressions; and that by faith in him we may be justified, and obtain peace with God. All these things being fully credited, begin to impress his heart. Faith renders them practical. The Bible is not a dead letter: every part of it influences the soul of the believer. Does he read, for

example, that Jesus Christ is his Prophet, Priest, and King? He accepts him in all these capacities: he sits at his feet for instruction, he reposes on his sacrifice for pardon, he obeys his laws, and endeavours to live to his glory. He cannot cherish any sin, and yet read unmoved the declarations of God against it. In fact, faith is connected with a complete change of character; and this change of character renders sin hateful, and the ways of holiness an object of delight. It is impossible to have true faith, the faith which realizes things not seen with as firm credence as if they were objects of sense, without corresponding emotions of soul. Such a faith lays hold of the testimony of God; so that whatever is witnessed by that testimony is deeply engraven upon the heart. All that God commands, faith desires to practise; all that he prohibits, faith avoids; all that he threatens, faith dreads; all that he promises, faith desires. Thus, being the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, faith tends to the purification not less than the justification of the believer.

2. Faith, again, has this effect on account of its *working by love*.—It brings all the affections of the soul into exercise, and fixes them upon God. The cross of Christ is its especial object. Under its influence the language of the Christian is, Shall I not love him who

first loved me? Shall I not live to the praise of Him who died for me? Shall I wound *Him* afresh by sin, who has been already so deeply wounded on my account? Shall I crucify him afresh, who was crucified on Calvary for my transgressions? Forbid it, love! forbid it, gratitude! No: let me fear him, and obey him; let me cherish his influences, let me submit to his will, let me endeavour to keep his commands.—Love is the most powerful of motives. Under its influence every duty becomes a pleasure; and to gratify the object of regard is a natural result of true affection. This is equally the case in religion. Where there is faith in Christ, there will be love; and where love exists, it will evidence itself in the fruits of holiness and obedience. These fruits will display themselves in all our social duties: having learned to love God, we shall love our brother also. Thus faith is the parent of every Christian grace and virtue: it worketh by love, it overcometh the world, it purifieth the heart.

3. We were, lastly, to shew that the same thing will appear from the circumstance, that *faith is the gift of God.*—Flowing from the Eternal Fountain of holiness, it necessarily partakes of a holy character. And this points out an important distinction between true and false faith. There is a faith, so called, which is the mere effect of example. Persons believe

the articles of the Christian creed, merely because they have been educated to do so. Such a faith neither justifies nor sanctifies. It is not till true faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, that these effects take place. A dead faith has no power whatever—except, indeed, to increase our condemnation; but the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God unites us to the Saviour, and draws from his fulness rich supplies of strength, of consolation, and of holiness.

This subject naturally leads us to inquire, Have we faith? And in order to settle this point, it equally leads us to ask, Are we purified in heart? True religion is not a mere form or fancy. We must be able to trace its effects in the soul and in the conduct. It must make and keep us humble and penitent; it must lead us to Christ Jesus for pardon and peace; it must derive from the Holy Spirit grace, and knowledge, and sanctification. In all the relations of life, and all the details of duty, it must evidence its power. It must rule the whole man, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Not that the Christian is perfect, or expects to be so in this world. But his purification must be daily proceeding. Old sins must be conquered and new ones repelled. His love, and faith, and gratitude to his God and Saviour,

must advance; his pride, and evil passions, and worldliness, must be correspondingly mortified. Thus must he proceed in all virtue and godliness of living, evidencing his faith by his works, till he arrives at that eternal blessedness which was purchased for him by his Saviour, and is conferred upon him freely by faith, but the qualification for enjoying which must be sought in that purification of soul which commences upon earth, and is perfected and consummated in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

SPIRITUAL MEDITATION.

PSALM CIV. 34.

My meditation of Him shall be sweet.

OF all the duties which become those who profess and call themselves Christians, there is none more usually neglected than that of devout reflection upon the concerns of religion. We observe persons constantly frequenting the house of God, nay, seeming for the moment to have some knowledge and enjoyment of those things which relate to their eternal peace, yet forgetting almost instantly what they have heard, and suffering the sacred impression to be effaced almost as soon as it was formed. While we pray that we may "read, mark, and learn" the holy Scriptures, we too often forget so inwardly to "digest" them that they may conduce to our spiritual nourishment, and strengthen us for our heavenly warfare. The neglect of an outward duty, the omission of our customary devotions, or of attendance on public worship, the breach of the Divine command "to

do good and to distribute," the indulgence of unhallowed tempers, or the stirring of worldly or sensual desire, is often followed by feelings of sorrow and repentance, accompanied with prayer to God for pardon and assistance; while we neglect that especial means of grace which, in many cases, is one of the most useful for preventing a recurrence of the evil,—spiritual meditation. But assuredly, if it be a sin not to read the Scriptures, or attend public worship, it is a sin also not to treasure up and revolve in our hearts those sacred truths which we have received; not to endeavour, by serious reflection in private, to turn them, by the blessing of God, to a practical account.

For the purpose of impressing upon our minds the duty under consideration, let us view,—

First, The proper objects of spiritual meditation;

Secondly, The benefits resulting from it; and

Thirdly, The best method of promoting and conducting it.

First. The proper objects of spiritual meditation are the truths revealed in the word of God, the doctrines and precepts, the invitations and warnings, the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, in all their bearings and relations to the temporal and eternal concerns of mankind,

and more especially with reference to our own spiritual state. In proportion as our practical acquaintance with divine subjects increases, they will appear more and more interesting and comprehensive, so that the longest life devoted to the study of the Scriptures would be insufficient to exhaust their sacred stores. There are, however, particular topics which more peculiarly call for our daily meditation;—such as the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; his presence with us; his inspection over us; our own guilt and misery as sinners in his sight; the means of salvation which he has provided through the merits and sacrifice of Christ, and our need of the Holy Spirit's influence, to convert our hearts, and to make us meet for the kingdom of heaven. It should also be our daily employment carefully to examine ourselves, to search out our particular sins, negligences, and ignorances, and deeply to consider not only the way in which they may be pardoned, but the means by which we may be delivered from their power. A person who never reflects in private, and as in the immediate presence of the Searcher of Hearts, upon these important concerns, cannot expect, whatever means of information he may possess, that he shall come to a right knowledge of them. Devout meditation, accompanied by earnest prayer, will be found to tend more, perhaps,

than any thing else, to render the "hearing of the ear" powerful for the conversion of the heart, and it is often employed by the Holy Spirit to effect his purposes of mercy upon the souls of men. When a sinner is once brought earnestly to reflect within himself on his state before God, and, in the view of his guilt and danger, to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" a beam of hope rises upon his path, which, till that salutary meditation occurred, was covered with an awful darkness, and would have led him to eternal destruction. The Gospel now becomes to him a subject of anxious consideration, and proper objects for employing his thoughts will never be absent from his mind.

Secondly. We are to consider some of the benefits which will result from the practice which has been recommended. These are numerous and important; for by seriously reflecting upon what we already know, the knowledge which before only floated in the understanding begins to influence the heart. It is easy, for example, to repeat penitential confessions of our sinfulness and guilt; but they will never excite truly godly sorrow, till we begin anxiously to look into our inmost souls, in order to perceive how far we resemble the descriptions which are given of human nature in the word of God. The excellencies also of Christ Jesus,

and the freedom of his salvation, will not much affect us as mere truths, till we feel their suitability to our own case, and have reflected sufficiently upon ourselves to known our guilt and weakness, our impenitence and misery. The Saviour cannot be duly valued by those who do not think of him, and enter into the nature and excellence of his offices, as they respect their own spiritual wants. It is by reflecting often and earnestly upon holy things that the affections become excited, and the heart filled with a sense of their unspeakable importance. A few superficial speculations would never have prompted those ardent feelings of love, and joy, and gratitude, and devotion, which abound in the writings of the inspired penmen. *They* considered frequently and habitually those things which *we* are too apt to suffer to glide from the memory almost as soon as they die away upon the ear. Religion was with *them*, as it has been with good men, in every age, a concern of such importance, as to engross the heart in the hours of retirement, and, by silently producing there the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," to render the deportment of its professors indicative of their holy vocation, and worthy of that sacred name by which they were called.

Meditation, in one view of it, may be regarded as conversing with God and with our own hearts. Enlightened by his presence, and

guided by his wisdom, we are enabled to understand more clearly our real condition, and to plead his cause with our own hearts; we learn to see the vanity of our false excuses and "refuges of lies;" and as the defects of our religious character become clearly unfolded to our view, we are incited to more urgent and unwearied supplications for the renewing influences of the Spirit of grace. While we trust to outward impressions, we are too often ready to deceive our own souls, and to mistake the mere stirring of natural affection or social feelings in religion, for genuine piety; but the moment we begin to commune with ourselves, no eye seeing us but the eye of God, if our hearts be not right with him, and if they be not truly actuated by religious principle, we shall be likely to discover the defect in our character, and the consequent peril of our situation. We shall learn to value at its true rate of worthlessness whatever pleasure we may feel in discharging the public duties of religion, while our tempers and affections are not brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. And on the other hand, where the heart *is* sincere, though the affections are languid, earnest meditation on heavenly things will kindle a brighter flame, and raise the mind to something of a right feeling of the unspeakable glories of the Gospel. Thus it appears that reflection and communion with our own hearts are of

high importance to persons of all descriptions; to the sinner, the hypocrite, the careless, and the uninformed, in order to bring them to the knowledge of their awful condition; and to the true Christian, in order to elevate his hopes and desires, to increase his spiritual knowledge, and not only to open new truths, but to make him enter with more interest into those which he already believes, but which he wishes to understand more fully, and to embrace with more ardour and affection. In circumstances especially of trial or temptation, serious reflection, with earnest prayer to God, will oftentimes have an influence of the most beneficial kind in convincing us of the vanity of the world, and in leading us to Him who is the only refuge for sinners, and the only fountain of true comfort and repose. When the mind is most distressed, and the prospect, either for this world or the next, most gloomy and appalling, the Christian who can retire to his closet, and lift up his heart to his Father which seeth in secret, meditating upon the love of God, and the grace of Christ, breathing after the influences of the Holy Spirit, and pleading the promises of the Gospel, will have a source of Divine consolation far above all that earthly prosperity can bestow. Whether, therefore, we study our spiritual solace and enjoyment, or our "growth in grace," we shall see the importance of accustoming ourselves to

meditate as well as to pray; drinking deeply in private into those heavenly truths of which we do not, perhaps, neglect the public acknowledgment.

Thirdly. Spiritual meditation being thus shewn to possess so much importance, it becomes necessary to inquire into the best method of promoting and conducting it. The duty is difficult on account of the absence of those helps which assist us in the performance of many others. Where there is nothing to arrest the outward attention, it requires a much greater effort of the mind to make spiritual things appear truly forcible and impressive. The natural senses, far from assisting us in contemplating heavenly realities, serve only to draw us away, and to make us wander from the great objects of attention. Even in the most heavenly-minded Christian, the wing that is spread towards heaven soon begins to flag: how much more, therefore, in the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced. Yet there is no just reason why even *these* should not derive something of the benefit attached to the duty under consideration; and with a view to effect so desirable an end, a few instructions may not be unimportant.

1. If, then, we would desire our meditations to be conducive to our spiritual welfare, they

should be regular and frequent. As the body is not supported and kept in vigour by an occasional repast, but by daily nourishment, so the soul also requires a stated and frequent supply of holy meditation to keep it alive and active in Divine concerns. The time and mode of our religious contemplations must indeed differ according to our opportunities of leisure, and the ability which God may give us for this employment: but even in the case of the youngest, the most illiterate, and the most engaged members of society, there is no adequate excuse for omitting the duty. If we do not meditate, we cannot pray aright; a wider distance will be interposed between God and us; the Holy Spirit will be grieved, and our spirituality of mind will be greatly lessened, if not entirely lost. Our conversation and intercourse with the world cannot partake of the true spirit of the Gospel, if we do not value and cherish that spirit in our moments of retirement. We should therefore avail ourselves of every favourable season for this delightful and profitable work. But more especially should we engage in it, when the mind is more than usually drawn towards heavenly objects, when the heart is softened by distress, and when we feel most our need of a Divine Saviour, and a celestial Comforter. Upon a sick bed those often learn to meditate upon eternal concerns, who never thought of them before; but the

desire of the true Christian is, in the days of *health* and *strength*, to live "the life of faith," and to walk daily with his God, in order that when affliction arises he may know whither to resort, and may find his heavenly Parent a God "nigh at hand, and not afar off," a "very present help in time of trouble."

2. To make our meditations profitable, we should pray and strive to be enabled to conduct them with holy and devout affections. The heart needs much purification to render it fit for heavenly contemplations: it requires to be emptied of the world, and of all objects that would pollute it by their presence. There should be a solemnity when we think upon heavenly things similar to that which we should feel were an angel from heaven, or, rather, were the great Judge himself to visit us, and to discourse with us respecting our everlasting welfare. We too often lose the benefits of sacred reflection by a levity of spirit which prevents our adequately feeling the importance of the subjects in which we are engaged. Yet what can be more momentous and awful than death and judgment, heaven and hell? And what more worthy of engrossing our secret thoughts, and leading us to such reflections as may be the means, by God's blessing, of our eternal salvation?

3. With a view still further to render our meditation profitable, we should cultivate all

the powers of the spiritual understanding, and all the graces of the renewed heart. Here there is ample and infinite scope. Whatever faith receives, meditation should lay hold of, and bring into powerful action. No devout feeling, no heavenly affection, no symptom of life towards God, or of deadness to the world, should be suffered to languish and decay. Every thing should be brought nigh, and appear in all its real importance. It does not require enlarged powers of mind, but a regenerate heart, to enable us to enter into this duty; and so far from its being true, that meditation and self-communion are duties that apply only, or chiefly, to the higher orders of intellect, and are of too refined and abstracted a nature for the youthful or uneducated Christian; no person more enjoys the blessings connected with it than the poor and unlearned man, whose hopes are exclusively in heaven, and to whom no subject is so congenial as that of the infinite grace of God unfolded in his revealed word.

In affliction especially, sacred contemplation is a happy privilege, which we may all enjoy. Let us, then, at such times, commune with ourselves, and inquire, "*Why* art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me?" Let us ascertain the cause; let us trace the evil to its source, and thus gain that self-acquaintance which such an investi-

gation, when humbly conducted, cannot fail to produce. Let us learn our sin, our infirmity, our guilt; feel more deeply our obligations to our Redeemer; cleave to him more firmly; mixing with our meditations devout prayer, which may give them a heavenly direction, and render them conducive to our happiness and spiritual advancement.

4. In order, lastly, to render our religious meditations not only profitable, but, as it is intimated in the text, "sweet" and delightful, we should learn to reflect upon the blessings treasured in the Gospel, in connexion with our own wants, and should endeavour so to ascertain the reality of our religious character as to feel that we are not uninterested spectators, but real inheritors of the blessings we contemplate. Let us survey with the eye of faith the glories of heaven, and the splendours of the unseen world; let us view our propitiated Creator in his infinite Majesty, and at his right hand his ever blessed and co-equal Son returned triumphantly from his conquest over sin and death, and opening the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Let us behold him also as a "High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and who is not only efficaciously pleading in our behalf, but is employed in sending down his Holy Spirit to "guide us into all truth," to comfort and sanc-

tify our hearts, and to direct us in "the way that leadeth to life everlasting." Thus contemplating, in holy meditation, Him who bore our burden, whose hands and feet were pierced for our sake, and whose voice of pity and forgiveness invites us to partake of his salvation; let us deeply reflect upon his goodness and our own ingratitude — his long-suffering and our provocation,—till those devout affections arise in our souls which may make our meditation sweet, as well as salutary, and which, while they humble us in the very dust, will raise Him to the throne of our hearts, and render it as much our real delight, as it is our bounden duty to do his will. Spiritual meditation thus conducted will give birth to ardent desires after God and holiness; so that we shall learn, in some humble proportion at least, to adopt the words of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee;" and shall arrive at the emphatic conclusion of the Apostle, that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

But to produce this effect, we should earnestly use every other assistance: we should join prayer, and reading, and Christian intercourse with our meditation; we should think upon the character and employments of the blessed inhabitants of heaven; we should contrast eternal things with the vain pursuits and

unsatisfactory enjoyments of earth; we should raise as high as possible our estimate of the value of the human soul, and the price paid for its redemption; we should contemplate in all its terrors that "blackness of darkness," that everlasting destruction, which awaits the impenitent sinner, in order that we may duly appreciate that mercy which provided an all-sufficient Ransom, and bought us with the invaluable price of the Redeemer's blood.

From this subject we may infer the awful condition of him who lives "without God in the world." If God be not in our meditations here, we have no scriptural reason to expect he will be our portion hereafter. The love of heaven and heavenly thoughts must commence upon earth; for dying in an unrenewed and unholy state, there is no reason to expect that our meditation of God will be any thing but an awful sense of his presence as our offended Judge, and a tormenting remorse at having neglected to turn to him while the means of salvation were in our power. The happy contrast to this awful scene can neither be imagined nor described; for "sweet" indeed, and infinitely blessed, will be the eternal contemplations of him who has known God upon earth, and to whom heaven itself is but the consummation of those holy pleasures which even in the present world he had begun to value and enjoy.

SERMON XXXIX.

DEBT AND GRACE.

ROM. iv. 4, 5.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

THE Apostle Paul, say the Homilies of the Church, mentions three things which go together in our justification before God. Upon the part of God the Father, his great mercy and grace, the original source of all the benefits conferred upon us; for it was because God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. On the part of Jesus Christ, his righteousness; that is, says the Homily, "the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly." Upon our part true and lively faith in the merits

of Jesus Christ. All human works and deservings are thus shut out from the office of justifying us; for, as continues the same Homily, "all the good works that we can do are imperfect, and therefore not able to deserve our justification; but our justification doth come freely by the mere mercy of God, and of so great and free mercy, that whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our heavenly Father, of his infinite mercy, without any our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied." The Holy Spirit also sustains an infinitely important part in the work of our salvation, for he is our Enlightener and Sanctifier. For the freeness of our justification, by faith only, in virtue of the obedience unto death of Christ, does not take away the duty and necessity of personal holiness and good works. The same Homily forcibly adds, that "faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying." This declaration is truly scriptural. Throughout the Bible good works are enjoined; but no where are they spoken of as meritorious to our justification before God.

Boasting is excluded: the reward of eternal life is wholly of grace, and not of debt; as the Apostle teaches in the text: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

In explaining this passage, I purpose, First, to inquire into the nature of the reward which the Apostle speaks of, and to shew that it is infinitely desirable: Secondly, to distinguish the two ways which he mentions of gaining it: Thirdly, to examine in which of these ways it is necessary that we ourselves should seek it; and, Fourthly, to answer some difficulties which may seem to arise from the subject.

First, then, we are to inquire into the nature of the reward which the Apostle speaks of, and to shew that it is infinitely desirable. He had opened the chapter with an allusion to Abraham, the father of the faithful, who "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." To Abraham God had given the promise: "I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing." There was also a spiritual promise made to him: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" that is, through Christ Jesus, who was to spring from

Abraham, as St. Paul plainly shews, where he says, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." He was promised a country; and that not merely a temporal possession, but, as the same Apostle shews, "a heavenly one;" for "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." His promised reward is summed up in one short declaration: "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." All possessions short of this were frail and perishable; though he was rich, and powerful, and had the promise of a numerous posterity, with every other temporal hope and enjoyment, these things alone could not have sufficed to make him lastingly happy; for "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" But when to these inferior benefits was added, what infinitely outweighed them all, the favour of God, and the prospect of eternal happiness in heaven, that was indeed an "exceeding great reward." Abraham had true faith in God; he proved this faith by his self-denial and obedience to God's commands; and his reward was, that "the Lord was the portion of his inheritance and of his cup." When

all the scenes of this short-lived world should for ever have closed, this reward would still retain its infinite value: it was inseparably connected with "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away:" it was the true happiness and perfection of human nature; the restoration to all, and more than all, that had been lost by the Fall of our first parents; a reward so exceedingly great, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive its magnitude. It included every other benefit. Pardon of sin, peace with God, victory over temptation, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, with all necessary supplies both for the soul and the body in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting, were so many streams from this inexhaustible fountain of blessings. In bestowing Himself as the exceeding great reward of his faithful servant, the Creator bestowed all subordinate benefits. The man who chooses God for his portion, secures whatever is really good or desirable. Is he cast down? his Almighty Protector is able and willing to support him. Is he in danger? God is his shield. Is he guilty? There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Is he unable in his own strength to withstand the force of temptation? The Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask him, to strengthen them with all might in the inner

man. Is he in a world of change and uncertainty? His God and Saviour are "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" no promise made to him shall fail: his expectation shall not be cut off; for He who is his eternal portion and reward, will do for him "exceedingly abundantly above all that he asks or thinks;" having given his own Son for him, He will with Him also freely give him all things.

And are not these benefits infinitely desirable? Is not such a reward above all estimation? Let us, then, secondly, consider the two ways mentioned by the Apostle of gaining it—the way of debt, and the way of grace; for "to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

We have, first, the way of *debt*. A servant, who has perfectly fulfilled his duties to his master, has a full right to his promised wages. The man who puts his name to a covenant, and keeps to the conditions of the agreement, is entitled to demand his share of the benefits of the contract. The reward in these cases is not of favour but of right. Now the Apostle supposes the case of a human being who should thus perfectly fulfil his obligations to God, and

he shews that he would stand justified; justified by the terms of the covenant into which his Creator had been pleased to enter with him. God was not indeed obliged to enter into such a covenant: it was of free favour alone that he created our first parents, that he endued them with happiness, and secured it to them on the condition of their obedience. But though it was his own infinite benevolence alone that caused him to enter into an agreement with his creatures for their advantage, yet the covenant being once fixed, the promise would become a matter of justice on their fulfilment of the conditions. The equity and purity of the Divine nature would secure to perfect obedience the reward of righteousness. Pardon would not be necessary, for there would be no danger of punishment; mercy would not be required, for justice alone would secure the promised reward. This is the case of the man who worketh; that is, of him who should unerringly fulfil the conditions of the law under which he is placed, whatever be their nature.

With this the Apostle next contrasts the reward of *grace*. He considers the case of one who, whether from imperfection or wilful transgression, has broken the law of his Creator; who has not kept the conditions of the covenant of works; who mistakes, or fails, or flagrantly trespasses, and thus places himself out of all right

to demand the fulfilment of the promise which rested upon his perfect obedience, and who has exposed himself to all the threatenings of the violated agreement. Claim to reward he now has none; nor has he even any right to hope that he shall escape the penal consequences of his transgression. If either punishment is to be remitted, or reward bestowed, it must be solely in virtue of some new allotment; and that not an allotment of mere justice but of mercy: it must be a grant of bounty from the offended to the offending party; it must be of grace, and not of debt; it must include pardon and reconciliation for the past; and whatever hope or reward it may hold out for the future, must be founded on a new basis. The offender is "ungodly;" he has not fulfilled the demands of the law: he is therefore under the curse of that law; and he has no refuge but in the unmerited mercy of the Lawgiver whom he has despised. This mercy may be exercised in any way which its Author may appoint; and the way in which God has been pleased to exercise it, the Apostle teaches us in the text: it is, "to him that believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly;" for though ungodly, yet by the merciful appointment of the Supreme Lawgiver, his "faith is counted to him for righteousness." He is not indeed personally entitled to the reward of righteousness; he has not worked out

his salvation according to the stipulations of the broken law: but a new covenant has been propounded to him; a covenant of grace and mercy; a covenant founded on the all-sufficient death and merits of the incarnate Son of God; and the way in which its blessings are made over to him is solely through faith. Though his past life has been unrighteous, yet when he repents of his sins, and humbly turns to God, he is "accounted righteous before God, for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith," which he could not be "for his own works or deservings." Such is the language of our church, in the Eleventh Article; and it is grounded on the frequent declarations of Scripture. Thus the Apostle Paul says, "We are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." He justifies the ungodly; he weighs not his merits, but pardons his offences; he blots out his sins in virtue of the atoning blood of the Saviour, and he makes him heir to an eternal inheritance of glory, purchased by the same all-perfect sacrifice.

These, then, are the two methods which the Apostle mentions for obtaining the reward of God's favour and eternal life;—the way

of debt, and the way of grace; unerring obedience, or mere mercy; the meritorious claim of spotless sanctity, or the free offer of unmerited pardon; the perfect righteousness of man, or the sovereign pleasure and love of God. The Scriptures point out no third way; the Apostle strongly rejects such a supposition: for "if," says he, "it is by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is not work."

Thirdly. The reward thus being of inestimable value, and there being but two methods possible for its attainment, it is of infinite moment, that we should examine in which of these ways it is necessary that we ourselves should seek it. And can we feel any doubt upon the subject? Can frail, and imperfect, and sinful, and guilty creatures hesitate one moment in deciding in which alone of these ways they can approach their Creator? Shall any human being since the Fall of Adam, claim pardon, justification, salvation, and eternal life, as of debt? Let conscience, enlightened by the word of God, answer the question. In what way does the Apostle, in the very chapter that precedes that from which the text is taken, speak of the whole human race?

Does he not tell us, that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" that, as it is written, both in the Old Testament and in the New, "There is none righteous, no not one;" that "there is none that understandeth, that seeketh after God;" that "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable," and "there is no fear of God before their eyes?" And can creatures thus justly exposed to God's wrath and condemnation, ask for the reward of obedience? Which of our works, or words, or thoughts, shall we dare to present before God as perfect and meritorious in all its motives and consequences? The way of debt is therefore wholly inapplicable to our case. The Apostle, in fact, mentions it only as a supposition: if indeed such a man as he describes in the first clause of the text *could* be found, then the reward would be his due: but who is the man that shall dare to inscribe his own name under the passage? "Who hath given to God?" If there be found any one who can support this claim, then indeed "it shall be rendered to him again." But such a boast would be wholly arrogant and futile. There remains then but one alternative. Free pardon is provided; not "to him who worketh;" that is, not to any man either as having perfectly kept the Divine law, or as having any claim in

virtue even of an imperfect obedience; but "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." We must come as "ungodly," casting ourselves wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, and trusting alone to his sacrifice by a true and lively faith. The Gospel does not appeal to us as righteous, or, to use the expression in the text, as "working:" it appeals to us as sinners: it provides redemption and justification for sinners,—for all who, whatever may have been their past conduct, truly turn to God through Jesus Christ. It excludes none but those who by their continued impenitence exclude themselves. Its language is, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and and without price." The Saviour demands no previous qualification but that we should feel the burden of our sins, and deeply lament them, and desire to forsake them. Thus approaching with a penitential reliance on his atonement, those sins, though many, are forgiven us, we are justified by faith, we obtain peace with God, we become heirs of everlasting life.

Fourthly. Such are the plain declarations of the holy Scriptures concerning the justification

of a sinner before God; but we must not close our remarks without alluding to some difficulties which may seem to arise from the subject. It may be asked, Is there not some danger in this representation? May not men abuse the grace of God? If we are justified by believing, and not by working, do we not cast a reproach upon good works, and incur the peril of causing them to be neglected? And further, Is not the language of the text in seeming opposition to another declaration of the same Apostle, where he says, "Work out your own salvation;" and to the whole strain of the Old and New Testaments, in which holiness of heart and life is most earnestly enjoined, and this at the eternal peril of our souls in case of disobedience? These seeming difficulties will be removed if we keep in mind that the Apostle in the text is not undervaluing any good work, but only shewing that no human works are good, so as to be meritorious in the sight of God, our best obedience being imperfect. Who could be more anxious to inculcate every good word and work than St. Paul? And he did so at the very time that he shews the exclusion of good works from the office of justifying, and assigns that office to faith only. For what is justifying faith; the faith mentioned in the text? It is not a simple assent; it is not calling ourselves

Christians; it is not a bold confidence that our sins are pardoned; but it is a simple reliance on the atonement of Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, and such a reliance as is accompanied by sorrow for sin, a desire to obey God's laws, tenderness of conscience, a love of holiness, and newness of heart and life. The sinner comes as "ungodly" for pardon and justification, on the ground only of his Saviour's death and merits; and ungodly he remains to the end of life, in the sense of being still a frail and sinful creature, who can lay no claim to the merit of perfectly obeying the laws of God: but he is not ungodly in the sense of continuing a deliberate and wilful transgressor: indeed he was no longer such when, guided by the influences of the Holy Spirit, he first came to Christ for justification; for had he continued such, he would still have remained at a distance, unconcerned about his immortal interests, and heedless of God's commands. The desire that brought him to his Saviour was accompanied by repentance and humility; the faith that united him to his Saviour was the fruitful parent of holiness and good works. Till this justifying faith was wrought in his soul, he had neither the inclination nor the power to do the will of God: he was in a state of alienation and rebellion; but no sooner did he truly believe than he became a new creature in Christ Jesus. At

the very time when he rejected the boastful conceit that he could so work, as on the footing of perfect obedience to deserve an eternal reward, and when he was led in self-abasement to cast himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, he began for the first time truly "to work out his salvation with fear and trembling;" for "it was God that worked in him to will and to do of his good pleasure." From love, from gratitude, from a holy change of principle and disposition, he began to live no longer to himself, but to Him who loved Him, and gave himself for him. His faith was proved by his works; and without this practical test, in vain would he have hoped that he possessed that justifying grace. Thus, then, the seeming difficulty ceases. Is the law of God made void by the doctrine of free pardon and justification, through faith, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ? No: it is established by that wholesome and comfortable doctrine, as our Article so justly calls it. It is shewn that the sinner may be pardoned; that the gate of mercy is opened to all who seek for entrance into the city of spiritual refuge; while it is rendered equally clear, that no warrant is held out to the unchristian and impious inference, Let us continue in sin that grace may abound. "God forbid; for how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

SERMON XL.

THE LAST WORDS OF THE SAVIOUR.

LUKE xxiii. 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

FEW things affect the mind more than the dying words of those whom we have known and loved; and if the individual be in any way eminent, or his last hours remarkable, with what eagerness do we listen to the narrative of his words and actions at the closing period of his life! And who so eminent, who so worthy of affection, as the Martyr of Calvary, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world? Of his expiring moments, we have, in the four Evangelists, a most affecting detail. He was not quietly breathing out his soul in the retirement of a peaceful death-bed, but in public, and in tortures upon the cross. We are not therefore to look for lengthened expositions of his doctrines, such as are recorded of some of the

ancient philosophers; or for a repetition of the conversations which he was accustomed to hold with his beloved disciples, or the listening multitudes. His words were but few; they amounted to but seven brief exclamations from the time he was transfixed to the cross, to the time he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Yet what volumes do these few short ejaculations speak! The first was a prayer for his enemies, "Father, forgive them;" the second was a promise to a humble penitent, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" the third was an effusion of that tenderness and sympathy which beamed in all he said and did,—"Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother;" the fourth was an expression of the deepest mental anguish,—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" the fifth, of intense bodily suffering, "I thirst;" the sixth, a triumphant exclamation of victory and conscious pleasure, even in the midst of extreme weakness, "It is finished;" the seventh, and last, was the calm committal to God of his soul about to quit a body worn down by afflictions and languishing on the cross, in sure and certain hope of that heavenly state which was so soon to burst upon it in unclouded glory,—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Having said thus, he meekly submitted to the stroke of death, and was translated to the pre-

sence of his Father and our Father, of his God and our God, there to dwell for ever in the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world.

It may afford us profit, in meditating on the last words of our dying Saviour, First, to consider some of the circumstances under which he uttered them; and, Secondly, to inquire what impression they ought to make upon our minds.

First, Let us ask what were the circumstances under which these memorable words were pronounced. Often have they been uttered by the lips of the faithful in all ages: they were the language of David, in the thirty-first Psalm, when in his heaviness he betook himself to his God: they were the language of St. Stephen, the first of that noble army of martyrs who died for the testimony of a crucified and ascended Redeemer: since which period often have they vibrated from the dungeon and at the stake, as well as from the calm death-beds of innumerable private Christians who from time to time have "slept in Jesus," awaiting the blissful moment when the sacred deposit thus committed to the hands of a "faithful Creator" shall be reunited to its once frail and earthly, but then glorified and imperishable, tenement, and shall be for ever with the Lord. But, hal-

lowed as are these memorable words by the lips of saints, confessors, and martyrs, never were they uttered under circumstances so interesting to us all, as those in which they are recorded in the text. They were then the language of the incarnate and expiring Redeemer; of Him who though equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead, and thinking it no robbery to claim the incommunicable honours of the Divine nature, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, under the lingering tortures of which he was now bidding farewell to a world which he had dignified by his presence, and redeemed by his blood; but which knew him not, and treated him as a blasphemer, an outcast, and a malefactor.

In looking back at the circumstances connected with the dying exclamation of our Lord, we may retrace all the leading events of human history. Even in paradise his final conflict with the powers of darkness was foretold. The Seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent; but "thou," it is added of the serpent, "shalt bruise his heel." The whole train of the subsequent narrative of mankind,

up to the present hour, has shewn the necessity for such a sacrifice for human transgression: the rites of primitive worship pointed towards it: it was foreshadowed in types, revealed in promises, and predicted in prophecies. At length, in the fulness of time, Messiah came; he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: he went about doing good: his greatest enemies could find no fault in him; yet we see him despised, rejected, buffeted, spit upon, scourged, and at length nailed in agony to the cross. When we retrace all the affecting circumstances of his extreme suffering in the garden of Gethsemane; his rejection, his being betrayed by a pretended friend and follower—one who dipped his hand with him in the same dish; denied by his most courageous disciple; led from street to street, and tribunal to tribunal, in pain and derision; forsaken by his dearest earthly friends, and exclaiming, My God, my God, why hast THOU forsaken me!—surely never were circumstances so calculated to rivet the impression of a dying exclamation as those under which the Saviour of the world exclaimed with his last breath; "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The peculiar observances, also, of the time at which he suffered, were remarkably striking. As no one of the Jewish rites or sacrifices could exhibit

all the circumstances of his death, he united the peculiarities of many. He was the victim led without the camp; being driven as an outcast from the gates of the city; and, as if to shew more forcibly the correspondence between the appropriate type of the paschal lamb, and the Anti-type Christ our Passover, who was slain for us, the very time when he was outstretched upon the altar of the cross was not only the ordinary hour of the evening sacrifice, but the very period when the paschal lamb was being slain according to the injunction of the Levitical Law.

Secondly. Having thus adverted to the circumstances under which our Lord's dying words were uttered, let us inquire what are the impressions which they ought to make upon us.—It is not enough that we gaze upon Him as it were with idle curiosity, as did the multitudes who witnessed his crucifixion; it is not enough even that we weep for his sufferings, or are aroused, like his disciple Peter, to a vehement indignation against his betrayers and murderers. We must bring the subject yet nearer to ourselves. Whence this scene of sorrow? why was that pure and sinless spirit thus breathed out in agony? why should He, who had never offended, thus bow beneath an unmeasurable

load of sorrow? The Scriptures furnish an answer to these inquiries. He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us nigh unto God: his heavenly Father permitted Him who knew no sin, to be made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In this sad spectacle, we strikingly behold the truth of that fundamental doctrine of our faith, the fallen and miserable condition of mankind; for it was to redeem us from this state of wrath, to procure us pardon for the past, and sanctifying grace for the future, that the Saviour thus submitted to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree, in order that, as in Adam all had died, so in him might all be made alive. Here, also, we witness the righteous displeasure of God against sin; here we read the extent and malignity of our offences, which made such a sacrifice necessary; and here we behold, in unextinguishable characters, the love of the Father, who gave his eternal Son for our transgressions,—the grace of the Son, who willingly devoted himself to be the victim for our offences,—and the consenting mercy of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to lead us, as humble penitents, to repose upon this never-failing Sacrifice for pardon and acceptance with God. No words can express the debt of gratitude which we owe to the ever-

blessed and undivided Trinity for this stupendous act of mercy; but in a most conspicuous manner should our eye be turned, in devout acknowledgment and humble faith, upon the great Sacrifice himself. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, or ever love like unto his love? Truly, that love was stronger than death. He had power to the last moment to have retracted his arduous undertaking; yet not all the pains of death could overcome his constancy. We find him, in the passage before us, still possessed of such unexhausted energy as to be able to cry with a loud voice; and still the sovereign disposer of his own immortal spirit. He had but to exert the wish to come down from the cross, in order effectually to reverse the taunt of his enemies, by saving himself, but thus abandoning the perilous task of saving others. But no; we see him, as it were, firmly fixing his soul for one short parting struggle; or rather should we say, for a composed and voluntary committal of his spirit to God. His office had been willingly and cheerfully undertaken: He was the arbiter of his own life or death; yet such was his love, such his constancy, that he deliberately drank off the awful cup, drop by drop, to its bitterest dregs: he did not repent of his sacrificial undertaking; he went step by step through the whole of its painful stages;

and now, having triumphantly exclaimed, "It is finished,"—the effort is over, the work is done,—he seals it beyond the possibility of retractation, by allowing the frail tie that bound him to earth to be disunited, and committing his spirit into the hands of his Father; not, as in the case of his servant Stephen, by a humble prayer, but by a confident and authoritative resignation, such as indicated to the last, that the events of both worlds were still under his control.

And while this scene is thus eminently calculated to impress us with an awful sense of the weight of our transgressions which made such a sacrifice necessary, and of the unextinguishable love and constancy of the Divine Surety, it should also *strengthen our faith, and confirm our hopes.* Are we tempted, for example, by specious objections, urged against the Divinity of our blessed Lord? How strikingly does the whole scene of his crucifixion prove him to have been infinitely more than a mere man! Had he been an impostor, is it likely that he would have sustained his assumed character to the last, in the midst of such acute and protracted agonies, and with every inducement to retrace his steps? Would he have died praying for his enemies, or have been permitted by Divine Providence to exhibit those marks of

supernatural character, which led even a Roman soldier to exclaim, "Truly, this was the Son of God?" Men are wont to be sincere in the agonies of a cruel and lingering death: yet the Saviour expired without wavering from his testimony, and with his last dying breath confirming that great fundamental truth, that "God was his Father;" thus, "making himself equal with God." And if any thing were necessary to add to the evidence which this scene affords of his Divinity, it would be incidentally supplied by the dying words of St. Stephen, already alluded to; for the last solemn deposit which our Lord placed in the hands of his heavenly Father, and which could be rightly committed to none but the Creator, St. Stephen, a very short time after, implored the Saviour himself to receive; thus affording the testimony of that holy martyr, that the Redeemer, in whose cause he was expiring, was in truth "God over all, blessed for evermore."

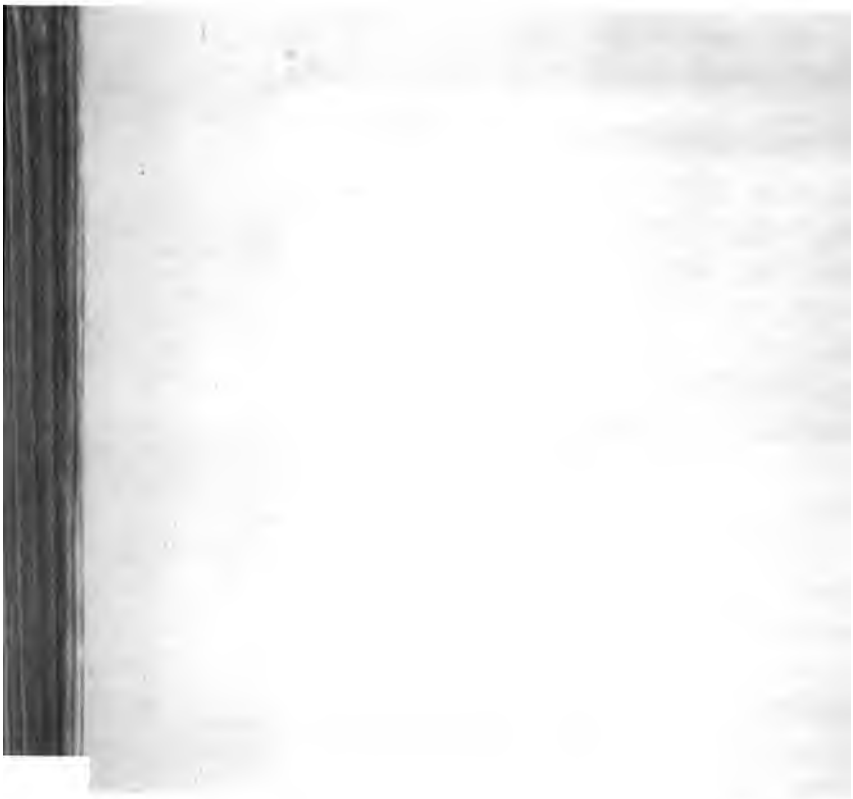
Or do we need our faith to be strengthened with regard to a future state, and the immortality of the human soul? Here we behold the incarnate Saviour in the agony of death; his body wounded, bruised, and about to yield up that breath of life which the Creator had breathed into it; yet his soul was unsubdued; and his faith never wavered as to the future

existence, the eternal duration, and the never-ending blessedness of that pure and untainted spirit which he was about to resign into the hands of his Father. He did not indeed employ that exulting language which we sometimes find issuing from the lips of dying malefactors, who, if they had been spared, would perhaps have fatally proved by a relapse into sin, how little reliance is to be placed on a hasty repentance, in the prospect of immediate death, and how much more befitting, under such circumstances, is the humble language of the publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," than the confident expressions of saints, and apostles, and martyrs who had long "fought a good fight," before they thus "finished their course with joy!" But though we do not hear from the Saviour any expression of those triumphant feelings with which he has often mercifully favoured his faithful servants in their last moments, and which self-deceivers have sometimes appropriated, yet he exhibited a calmness, a confidence, and unshaken certainty as to the future, which ought to strengthen our faith, even more than if he had devoted his expiring moments to a formal statement of his doctrines, and the proofs of their Divine inspiration.

And oh that, after his example, we may be

enabled in our dying hours to commit our souls in faith and hope to our God and Saviour! And in order that such may be our blessed lot, let us begin from the present moment diligently to make our calling and election sure. Let us cast ourselves, in penitence and faith, upon his all-sufficient sacrifice; let us earnestly endeavour to do his will, and fulfil his commands; and let us pray for the constant grace of his Holy Spirit for that purpose; remembering always that he died not only to bring us nigh to God by his blood, but also to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. If called to suffer for his cause, let us imitate the example of his patience; and follow him in the thorny but salutary path of self-denial, taking up our cross daily, and treading in his hallowed footsteps. If such be our character, unspeakably great is our privilege. In all our afflictions, he is afflicted: the spirit which he committed to his Father, is still in heaven, where he for ever dwells, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, pleading our cause at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and pouring down upon us the daily influences of his Holy Spirit. We may therefore confidently repose in him; we may look forward with devout joy to the eternal world as having there a faithful and tried Friend; and we may tread as

on the confines of a paradise, where this once crucified but now risen and ascended Conqueror, awaits our arrival. Into his hands, therefore, let us every day and hour habitually commit our immortal spirits, not knowing how soon he may summon us to his heavenly mansion, there to be like him, and to see him as he is; not as on the cross of his humiliation, but in the glory which he had with his Father, before all worlds.

THE END.

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